AN

ANALYSIS

OF

PALEY'S

VIEW OF THE

Evidences of Chriſtianity.

(Price Two Shillings.)

BRITISH MUSEUM

AN ANALYSIS OF PALEY'S VIEW OF THE Evidences of Chriſtianity.

IN THREE PARTS.

PART I.
Of the direct Hiſtorical Evidence of Chriſtianity, and wherein it is diſtinguiſhed from the Evidence of other Miracles.

PART II.
Of the auxiliary Evidences of Chriſtianity.

PART III.
A brief Conſideration of ſome popular Objections.

Whence but from *heaven*, ſhould men unſkill'd in arts,
In different nations born, in different parts
Weave ſuch agreeing truths? or how? or why?
Should *all* conſpire to cheat us with a lie?
Unaſk'd their pains, ungrateful their advice,
Starving their gains, and *martyrdom* their price.

DRYDEN.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

IN drawing up the following Analyſis, the Editor had no other object in view, than to obtain a more general diſcuſſion of this moſt important of all queſtions—*Is Chriſtianity true?* For the event of the inquiry he is under no apprehenſion.——The extenſive and accurate view which Dr. PALEY has taken of its evidences, merits the applauſe of every friend to revelation, and, it is hoped, will be the means of exciting that degree of attention, among the friends to freedom of inquiry, which the ſubject ſeems to demand.

The very able account given of Dr. PALEY's work in the Analytical Review, the Editor of this pamphlet had never heard of, till after he had finiſhed his own Analyſis. He has compared them, and, in conſequence, has altered a few paſſages.

APRIL 20, 1795.

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PREPARATORY CONSIDERATIONS.

WITHOUT attempting to prove the neceſſity of a revelation, it may be obſerved, that in judging of Chriſtianity, the queſtion lies between *this* religion, and none: for if Chriſtianity be not credible, no one, with whom we have to do, will ſupport the pretenſions of any other. Suppoſe, then, there be a Creator, who, in his works, has conſulted the happineſs of his ſenſitive creation;—ſuppoſe a part of his creation to have received from their maker faculties capable of rendering a moral obedience to his will;—ſuppoſe the Creator intends for theſe rational agents a *ſecond* ſtate of exiſtence, in which their ſituation will be regulated by their behavior in the *firſt*;—ſuppoſe the knowledge of it be conducive to the happineſs of the ſpecies; under theſe circumſtances is it impoſſible that a *revelation* ſhould be made to acquaint them with it? P. 1—3.

A revelation cannot be made, but by miracles; conſequently in whatever degree it is probable, that a revelation ſhould be made; in the ſame degree it is probable miracles ſhould be wrought. P. 3.

The attributes of the Deity, or the exiſtence of a future ſtate, are not *aſſumed*, in order to *prove* the reality of miracles. That reality muſt be proved by

evidence. We aſſert only, that in miracles adduced to the ſupport of revelation, there is not any ſuch antecedent improbability as no teſtimony can ſurmount. In maintaining which, we contend, that the incredibility of miracles is not greater, than (1.) that a future ſtate of exiſtence ſhould be deſtined, by God, for the human race: and, (2.) that, being ſo deſtined, he ſhould acquaint them with it. The *proof* of theſe propoſitions is not neceſſary; it is ſufficient that they are not ſo violently improbable, ſo contradictory of the divine power, and character, that either the propoſitions themſelves, or the facts connected with them, ought to be rejected at firſt ſight. To this length does a modern objection to miracles go, viz. "*that no human teſtimony can in any caſe render them credible, becauſe it is contrary to experience that a miracle ſhould be true, but not contrary to experience that teſtimony ſhould be falſe.*" Strictly ſpeaking, the narrative of a fact is *then* only contrary to experience, when the fact is related to have exiſted at a time and place; at which time and place we, being preſent, did not perceive it to exiſt. The improbability ariſing from the *want* of experience, is only equal to the probability, that, if the thing were true, ſuch things would be *generally* experienced. Admitting that miracles were wrought upon the firſt promulgation of Chriſtianity, it is not certain, or a probability approaching to certainty, that ſuch miracles would become objects of *general* experience. The *force of experience*, ſuppoſes the courſe of nature *invariable*; or its *variations*

tions general: but the courſe of nature, may be called the agency of an intelligent Being; and then it is not unreaſonable to expect that ſuch a Being may, upon occaſions of peculiar importance, interrupt the order which he had appointed, yet, that ſuch occaſions ſhould ſeldom return, and conſequently be confined to the experience of a few. P. 4—10.

It has been ſaid, that miracles are effects without cauſes; as if the cure of the palſy were aſcribed to the *touch;* or of blindneſs to the *clay.* Theſe are merely the *ſigns* to connect the miracle with its *end.* The effect we aſcribe ſimply to the volition of the Deity, of whoſe exiſtence, and power we have previous, and independent proof. P. 10, 11.

According to Mr. Hume, the queſtion is, *whether it be more improbable that the miracle ſhould be true, or the teſtimony falſe?* Upon this ſtate of the controverſy, ſuppoſe twelve men, whoſe probity and good ſenſe I had long known, ſhould ſeriouſly and circumſtantially relate an account of a miracle, wrought before their eyes, and in which it was impoſſible for them to be deceived; that rather than acknowledge that there exiſted any impoſture in the caſe, they ſhould ſuffer themſelves, when examined ſeparately, to be racked, burnt, or ſtrangled, and that I myſelf was witneſs to the ſtory and ſufferings; by Mr. Hume's rule I am not to believe them. Now I undertake to ſay, no man would diſbelieve them. P. 11—15.

PART

PART I.

OF THE DIRECT HISTORICAL EVIDENCE OF CHRISTIANITY, AND WHEREIN IT IS DISTINGUISHED FROM THE EVIDENCE ALLEDGED FOR OTHER MIRACLES.

CHAP. I.

PROPOSITION I. *There is ſatisfactory evidence that many, profeſſing to be the original witneſſes of the Chriſtian miracles, paſſed their lives in labours, dangers, and ſufferings, voluntarily undergone in atteſtation of the accounts which they delivered, and ſolely in conſequence of their belief of thoſe accounts; and that they alſo ſubmitted, from the ſame motives, to new rules of conduct.* P. 19.

To ſupport this propoſition two points muſt be made out: *firſt*, that the founder of the inſtitution, his aſſociates, and immediate followers, acted the part which the propoſition imputes to them: *ſecondly*, that they did ſo, in atteſtation of the miraculous hiſtory recorded in our ſcriptures, and ſolely in conſequence of their belief of the truth of this hiſtory. But previous to our producing any *particular* teſtimony to theſe aſſertions, we obſerve, that the fact of the exertions and voluntary ſufferings of the firſt Chriſtians, is probable from the *nature of the caſe*. P. 19.

I. The Chriſtian religion exiſts, and was eſtabliſhed. It is, therefore, probable, that its author and his diſciples exerted themſelves in publiſhing, and propagating this

this religion;—in the proſecution of which, they, like other miſſionaries of a new faith, muſt have devoted themſelves to conſtant and laborious preaching, and ſubmitted to a ſequeſtration from the pleaſures of the world. In theſe undertakings, perſons are not likely to engage, or, however, to *perſiſt* in them, from any other motive than conviction. P. 20.

II. It is probable, that the propagation of Chriſtianity was attended with difficulty and danger.

1. As addreſſed to the *Jews;* it contradicted the popular expectation concerning the Meſſiah, and their prejudices reſpecting other nations: inſtead of exalting their nation above the reſt of the world, Chriſtianity was to advance thoſe, whom they deſpiſed, to an equality with themſelves.—The Jewiſh religion laid great ſtreſs on ceremonies; the Chriſtian ſcheme preſcribed in their ſtead, moral rectitude, and inward purity:—the Jews had crucified Chriſt, which the preachers of his ligion would repreſent as a cruel murder; they would alſo raiſe jealouſy in the *Roman Government*, by avowing an unqualified obedience to a new maſter, whom they conſidered as the perſon, foretold to the Jews under the title of King;—they had, likewiſe, to oppoſe a prieſthood poſſeſſed of municipal authority, and were under a foreign government conſtantly ſurrounded with enemies. P. 22—28.

2. From the *Heathen*, the preachers of Chriſtianity had but little favour to expect. For, (1.) The Chriſtian religion was *excluſive;* it denied the truth of every article of the heathen mythology; if it prevailed, it muſt be by the overthrow of all their ſtatues and temples; it pronounced all their gods *falſe*, their worſhip *vain.* (2.) The firſt Chriſtians did not merely propoſe their doubts, or diſbelief; but they collected proſelytes, formed ſocieties among the common people, and enjoined their followers to withdraw from the public

worſhip

worſhip of their country. (3.) This oppoſition would ſubject them to the danger of *private* enmity, even where no *public* perſecution was denounced by the ſtate; nor would they find protection, in that general diſbelief of the popular theology, which is, then, ſuppoſed to have prevailed; ſince, unbelievers are not uſually tolerant; examples of which, we have in *Pliny* and *Trajan*. Beſides, religion was conſidered as an affair of the ſtate;—it had the veneration of long eſtabliſhment;—it was ſplendid and gaudy;—and upon the eſtabliſhment of its rites, the proſperity of the country was ſuppoſed to depend. Neither could the Chriſtian miſſionaries expect protection or impunity from the *people*, who conſidered all religions as equally *true*;—nor from the *philoſopher*, who conſidered them all as equally *falſe*;—nor from the *magiſtrate*, who held them all to be equally uſeful. P. 28—36.

3. The firſt preachers, muſt, in conſequence of their new profeſſion, have conformed themſelves, to the inſtitution they preached to others. This muſt have made an eſſential change in their habit of life, which is very difficult to effect. Men are brought, almoſt, to any thing ſooner than to change their habit of life, eſpecially when the change is attended with any conſiderable degree of ſelf-denial. Hence, from the *nature and exigency of the caſe*, the truth of the propoſition may be inferred. P. 36—40.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

Evidence of the Sufferings of the firſt Propagators of Chriſtianity, from PROFANE TESTIMONY. P. 42.

TACITUS, who wrote ſeventy years after the death of Chriſt, ſpeaking of the burning of Rome, in the reign of Nero, relates, "that this emperor, to do away the "ſuſpicions entertained againſt himſelf of having order-"ed the city to be ſet on fire, laid the guilt, and inflicted "the moſt cruel puniſhments, upon a ſet of men called "Chriſtians. The founder of that name, was Chriſt, "who had been put to death in the reign of Tiberius. "He adds, that this ſuperſtition, thus checked for a-"while, broke out again and ſpread over Judea, and "through Rome, &c." This paſſage proves, (1.) that the founder of the inſtitution was put to death;—(2.) that, in the ſame country in which he was put to death, his religion, after a ſhort check, broke out again and ſpread;—(3.) that it ſo ſpread, as that, within thirty-four years after his death, a great multitude of Chriſtians were found at Rome. Hence, the original teachers could not have been idle; nor could their exertions have been without danger. P. 43—6. SUETONIUS, contemporary with Tacitus, ſays, "the Chriſtians, a ſet of men "of new, and miſchievous ſuperſtition, were puniſhed." JUVENAL probably alludes to theſe executions, Sat. i. v. 154. Theſe things, it is likely, took place in the life-time of ſome of the Apoſtles, certainly in the life-time of ſome of their converts. If then the founder, and the firſt race of converts were put to death, it is hardly credible, that his companions could eſcape in ſafety? P. 47—9.

The teſtimony of PLINY relates, (1.) to the great number of Chriſtians of both ſexes, and to the progreſs

of Chriſtianity which extended to ſmall towns, and even to the open country, as well as to cities. (2.) To their ſufferings in conſequence of anonymous informations *without* ſovereign authority; a clear proof that the profeſſion of Chriſtianity was attended with danger. P. 50. PLINY's account is confirmed by ADRIAN, who enjoins, that *for the future*, Chriſtians ſhould be *legally* brought to trial. MARTIAL's teſtimony proves, that the ſufferings of the firſt Chriſtians were *voluntary*. EPICTETUS imputes their firmneſs in ſuffering, to madneſs, or faſhion; and M. AURELIUS aſcribes it to obſtinacy. P. 52—54.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

Indirect evidence of the ſufferings of the firſt propagators of Chriſtianity, from the Scriptures, and other antient writings. P. 55.

WE have four hiſtories of Chriſt:—A hiſtory taking up the narrative at his death; and a collection of letters written by principal agents which atteſts the ſufferings of the witneſſes of the hiſtory, directly and indirectly, expreſsly and incidentally, by narratives of facts, and by arguments and diſcourſes built upon theſe facts. P. 56.

I. Theſe books relate that Chriſt was, in conſequence of his undertaking, put to death at Jeruſalem;—that his religion was, notwithſtanding, ſet forth in the ſame city, propagated throughout Judea, and preached in other parts of the Roman Empire. Theſe points are alſo fully confirmed by Tacitus. What then could the diſciples of Chriſt expect for themſelves, when they ſaw their maſter put to death? They could not hope to eſcape the dangers, in which he had periſhed. P. 57.

II. All the hiſtories repreſent Chriſt as foretelling the perſecution of his followers. See Mat. xxiv. 9. Mark iv. 17. alſo x. 30. Luke xxi. 12—16. alſo xi. 49. John xvi. 4. alſo xv. 20. and xvi. 33. Either, then, the Evangeliſts have delivered the words of Chriſt, and the event correſponded with the prediction; or they put the prediction into his mouth, becauſe, when they wrote their hiſtories, the event had turned out ſo. P. 58—60.

III. Theſe books abound with exhortations to patience, and with topics of comfort under diſtreſs. See Rom. viii. 35, 37. 2 Cor. iv. 8, 9, 10, 14, 16, 17. James v. 10, 11. Heb. x. 32—36. 2 Theſſ. i. 1—5. Rom. v. 3, 4. 1 Pet. iv. 12, 13, 19. Theſe paſſages would be deſtitute of meaning, unleſs the times called for patience and conſtancy. P. 61—65.

CHAP. IV.

Direct evidence of the ſufferings of the firſt propagators of Chriſtianity, from the Scriptures, and other antient writings. P. 69.

THE ſcripture account of the exertions and ſufferings of the firſt preachers of Chriſtianity (being mixed in the general hiſtory, negatives the ſuppoſition of fraud) is detailed with the utmoſt particularity of names and circumſtances. It ſtates that Chriſt, during his miniſtry, employed himſelf wholly in Judea and Galilee;—that he was aſſiſted in his labours, by twelve perſons, choſen from among his followers, who conſtantly attended upon him until his death, and who were commiſſioned by him, when his own miniſtry was concluded, to publiſh his goſpel, and collect diſciples to it from all countries;—that they began their work at Jeruſalem, and made many converts; which alarmed the Jewiſh government, and two of the twelve were apprehended and impriſoned; who, being examined and diſmiſſed, reported what had paſſed to their companions, and apprized them of the dangers connected with their undertaking;—that in a ſhort time after, the twelve were thrown into priſon, and being puniſhed, were ſuffered to depart;—that they neither quitted Jeruſalem, nor ceaſed from preaching, but only excluded themſelves from the *temporal* affairs of the ſociety. P. 66—71. The people at length joined their ſuperiors, and a *general* perſecution commenced with ſtoning one of the community. This perſecution raged with ſo much fury, as to drive moſt of the new converts from Jeruſalem; the *twelve*, however, remained in the city, and continued to correſpond with, and confirm the labours of thoſe ſcattered abroad. Precepts were now iſſued by the Jews, to perſecute the Chriſtians in every place where they had authority; and

and one of the perſons employed in this buſineſs became a proſelyte to the religion, which he was going to extirpate. He thus brought upon himſelf the enmity of his party, and narrowly eſcaped with his life. P. 72—4. This perſecution, after a ſhort intermiſſion, the cauſe of which is not certainly known, was renewed under the government of Herod Agrippa, who beheaded one of the original Apoſtles; and attempted to put another to death, who eſcaped from priſon. The facts are recorded with great particularity, and without any propenſity to exaggerate. P. 75—8.

Our hiſtory, leaving the other apoſtles, proceeds with the memoirs of St. Paul, who, with a companion, carried the new religion through the provinces of Leſſer Aſia; during this whole journey, their perſons were inſulted, and their lives endangered. P. 78—80. Theſe two afterwards, owing to a diſpute, ſet out on different routs. The hiſtory goes on with St. Paul, whoſe enterpriſes were attended with ſimilar dangers. He croſſed the Ægean Sea, taking with him our hiſtorian, and arrived at Philippi, where he was whipped and impriſoned. They then paſſed on to Theſſalonica, where the populace were excited againſt them. At Berea the Jews excited ſuch commotions among the people, as obliged the Apoſtle to eſcape to Athens. He was brought before the Roman tribunal, at Corinth, whence he was diſmiſſed, through the contempt which the magiſtrate had for the controverſies of the Jews, of which he accounted Chriſtianity to be one. The ſucceſs of his miniſtry at Epheſus had nearly coſt him his life. He arrived again at Corinth, whence he was driven by a conſpiracy back to Philippi. At Jeruſalem the populace would have killed him, had he not been reſcued by an officer of the guard, who afterwards treated him with great cruelty. And in his way to Rome he encountered the perils of ſhipwreck, nevertheleſs, upon his arrival he

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was not deterred from preaching the new religion. The hiſtorian, in theſe facts, is ſupported by the teſtimony of St. Paul's own letters, which correſponds with the hiſtory, in many circumſtances, relative both to his own ſufferings, and thoſe of his fellow-labourers. P. 80—9.

CLEMENT ſpeaks of the martyrdom of Peter, Paul, and many others. HERMAS, POLYCARP, IGNATIUS, atteſt the ſame. A circular letter from the church of Smyrna, ſoon after the death of Polycarp, deſcribes the nature of a perſecution in thoſe days. P. 90—4.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

Obſervations on the preceding Evidence. P. 95.

I. THE ſcripture hiſtory, though principally confined to one Apoſtle, ſhews *the nature of the ſervice.* The Apoſtle, in his various letters refers to the ſufferings of the others, as well as to his own. The former part of the hiſtory gives a ſhort ſketch of the ſeizure and impriſonment of two; afterwards of the ſtoning to death of Stephen; and the beheading of John. P. 95—7.

II. No credit, at preſent, is taken for the miraculous part of the hiſtory, nor for the correctneſs of *ſingle paſſages*, but only for the *general* facts. P. 97.

III. The reality of the Apoſtolic hiſtory, is only aſſigning adequate cauſes for effects produced; and the details are perfectly agreeable to what might reaſonably be expected from the nature of their undertaking, compared with the character of the age and country in which it was carried on. P. 98.

IV. Theſe records ſupply evidence to prove, that the primitive followers of Jeſus aſſumed a new, and peculiar courſe of life; and became eminent for piety, purity and benevolence. For, (1.) the injunctions of their teachers were very ſtrict, which, if not completely obeyed would produce a difference in their conduct, ſee Acts i. 14. alſo ii. 46. and xii. 12. (2.) Their *new* character is perpetually referred to by the letters of their teachers. See Eph. ii. 1.—3. Tit. iii. 3. 1 Pet. iv. 3, 4. 1 Cor. vi. 2. Rom. vi. 21. (3.) This agrees alſo with the character afterwards given of the chriſtians by Pliny. P. 100—104.

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CHAP. VI.

That the ſtory, for which the firſt propagators of Chriſtianity ſuffered, was MIRACULOUS. P. 106.

(1.) THE prevalence of the religion; (2.) The activity of the founder; (3.) The oppoſition which his activity excited; (4.) His fate as atteſted by heathen writers; (5.) The ſame teſtimony to the ſufferings of the firſt chriſtians; (6.) The founder's predictions of the ſufferings of his followers; (7.) Letters written by the principal agents, referring to their ſufferings; (8.) A hiſtory, written by a companion of one of the new teachers;—prove, that a number of perſons, at that time, advanced an extraordinary ſtory, and for the ſake of propagating it, endured perſecution; and from a perſuaſion of its truth, entered upon a new courſe of life. P. 106—8. They pretended alſo to have *miraculous* evidence for this ſtory; for there could be nothing elſe, upon which to reſt their claim to attention. A Galilean peaſant was announced to the world, as a divine lawgiver. Without ſome proofs of his miſſion, the pretenſion could claim no credit. It could only be ſupported by *miraculous* evidence, without which he could not have excited a doubt among the Jews, whether he was the Meſſiah; nor could his followers, without an appeal to ſuch a token, have had any ground to ſtand upon, in attempting to propagate his religion. That the ſtory was *miraculous*, may alſo be inferred from the powers laid claim to by Chriſtians in ſucceeding ages. P. 108—12.

CHAP. VII.

That it was, in the main, the ſtory which we have NOW, *is proved by indirect conſideration.* P. 114.

I. THERE exiſts no trace or veſtige of any other ſtory. The remote, and incidental notices of Chriſtianity, which are found in the *heathen writers*, are. that it originated with Jeſus, who was afterwards crucified at Jeruſalem, and that it was propagated into diſtant countries. The *manners* of the Chriſtians, they likewiſe deſcribe in terms conformable with the accounts of our books. P. 115—118.

The *Jewiſh writers* of that period advance no other hiſtory of the tranſaction, than that which we acknowledge. Joſephus mentions John the Baptiſt with circumſtances agreeing with the Chriſtian ſtory. In another paſſage, the authenticity of which is controverted, he ſpeaks of Jeſus as the Meſſiah. This paſſage was *genuine*, or the ſilence of the hiſtorian was *deſigned:* if deſigned, it may be imputed to the difficulty which he found in repreſenting the buſineſs; on a ſimilar account, the principal circumſtance in the life of Conſtantine was omitted by Euſebius. P. 118—23.

II. The whole ſeries of Chriſtian writers, from the firſt age of the inſtitution down to the preſent, proceed upon the general ſtory which our ſcriptures contain. P. 123.

The *letters* of the Apoſtles, tranſmit, incidentally, the principal circumſtances of the hiſtory. P. 124. Barnabas relates the ſufferings of Chriſt, the choice of his Apoſtles, and refers to his miracles. P. 126. By Clement we have the reſurrection of Chriſt recorded, and the miſſion of his Apoſtles. P. 127. Polycarp recogniſes the virtues and ſufferings of Chriſt; and is ſaid to have received accounts of his miracles from eye witneſſes.

P. 128. Ignatius frequently alludes to the hiſtory of Chriſt; and Quadratus to his works. P. 129. From the writings of Juſtin Martyr, a life of Chriſt, agreeing with our ſcriptures, might be collected. P. 130. After this time, the hiſtory, as given by the Evangeliſts, occurs in antient Chriſtian writings, as familiarly as in modern ſermons.

III. The religious rites of the early Chriſtians, ſprung out of the narrative *now* in our hands. P. 133.

In *our* account Chriſt directs his diſciples to be baptized. The firſt Chriſtians were baptized. He directs them to hold religious aſſemblies. They did hold religious aſſemblies. *Our* accounts make the Apoſtles aſſemble on a ſtated day in the week: during the firſt century, ſtated days for aſſembling were obſerved. *Our* hiſtories record the inſtitution of the Lord's ſupper. The early Chriſtians univerſally celebrated it. Theſe rites were obſerved in Chriſtian ſocieties of different nations and languages. P. 134.

IV. *Our* account, bears proof that it is an account of facts known and believed at the time; therefore the goſpels were not the *cauſe* of the Chriſtian hiſtory, but the conſequence of belief in it. This is expreſsly declared by Luke in his preface. See Luke i. 1—4. It is alſo inferred from St. John's goſpel, as the hiſtorian refers to facts which he does not relate; an inſtance of this kind is the *aſcenſion*, which is not mentioned in its place, but is referred to—Chap. vi. 62. and xx. 17. Hence the notoriety of the aſcenſion, among thoſe who were likely to read his book. The general notoriety of the ſtory, is intimated by the manner in which the narrative is introduced, chap. i. 15. "John bare witneſs, &c." ſuppoſes, that the reader knew who John was. The reference to John's impriſonment, chap. iii. 24. could only come from a writer who ſuppoſed the fact well known. P. 135—9.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

The ſame proved from the authority of our Hiſtorical Scriptures. P. 142.

BEFORE this proof is ſtated, it muſt be premiſed,

I. That if any one of the four Goſpels be proved genuine, this is ſufficient to eſtabliſh the identity of the hiſtory. P. 143.

The received author of the firſt, was an original apoſtle;—of the ſecond, an attendant upon one of the apoſtles;—of the third, the companion of the moſt active teacher of this religion;—of the fourth, an apoſtle. They all lived at the time, and on the ſpot, and give *circumſtantial* accounts of the miracles. If the Goſpels of Matthew and John proceeded from them, they muſt be true in ſubſtance; or wilful falſehoods. If falſe, the authors were villains, without the proſpect of advantage. P. 143—6.

At preſent we only aſſert, that what the goſpels contain, is the ſame as what the apoſtles preached. How ſtands the proof? A ſet of men publiſhed a miraculous ſtory, upon the ſtrength of which, they called upon mankind to embrace new rules of action; and in atteſtation of which, they voluntarily expoſed themſelves to dangers. The particulars of this ſtory, if our books be genuine, are derived from the beſt authority. For if the firſt goſpel were written by Matthew, we have the narrative of an eye-witneſs, and apoſtle, to judge what miracles were attributed to Jeſus: if the goſpel of John alone were genuine, we have the ſame degree of evidence. If both theſe were ſpurious, yet if the goſpel of Luke, or Mark, were written by the perſon whoſe name it bears, or by any other perſon in the ſame ſituation, we ſtill have the account of a contemporary, and

aſſociate of the apoſtles, which authority ſeems ſufficient, when the queſtion is ſimply, what it was the apoſtles advanced. P. 147—51. Since the New Teſtament contains four *diſtinct* hiſtories, the genuineneſs of any one of which is perfectly ſufficient, we are at leaſt intitled to the advantage of ſo many *ſeparate probabilities*. But if it ſhould appear, that the Evangeliſts had ſeen each others works; it may, perhaps, ſubtract from their characters, as teſtimonies *ſtrictly* independent, but it diminiſhes very little from the authority of any one that is genuine, or their mutual confirmation. By the paralleliſms between Matthew and Luke, it may be ſuppoſed, that Luke had conſulted Matthew's hiſtory, or that brief memoirs of Chriſt had been committed to writing which both conſulted; either ſuppoſition will agree with Luke's profeſſions, who declares that he had diligently inveſtigated the ſubject. The goſpel by St. John is admitted as *independent* teſtimony; therefore if any *one* of the four be *genuine*, we have in *that one*, ſtrong reaſon to believe, that we poſſeſs the accounts which the original propagators of the religion delivered. P. 151—5.

II. The *aggregate* authority of the Scriptures is to be conſidered. P. 155.

In the evangelic hiſtory there is an accumulation of teſtimony which hardly belongs to any other. Each goſpel is a confirmation of the others; the exiſtence of four ſeparate hiſtories is a proof that the ſubject had a foundation, and the facts common to all may be conſidered as fixed in credit and publicity. The "Acts of the Apoſtles," as a ſupplement to theſe hiſtories, eſtabliſhes the account; and the various *epiſtles* written by the principal agents in the buſineſs, and upon the buſineſs, ſupport the concluſion. P. 156—8. The New Teſtament is often conſidered as *one book*, as *ſingle evidence*, and its different parts not as *diſtinct* atteſtations,

which

which the *diſcrepancies* among the ſeveral documents prove they were. The hiſtories were probably not immediately written, but were the creatures of emergency, either to inſtruct the converts, or to prevent the circulation of erroneous narratives. P. 158—63.

III. The *genuineneſs* of the hiſtorical books of the New Teſtament is *not* eſſential to the fate of our argument. P. 164. The queſtion *now* is—Whether the goſpels contain the ſtory which the apoſtles publiſhed. If it be granted that they were written by ſome of the early diſciples of Chriſtianity, and *received* by the ſocieties founded by the apoſtles, as containing authentic accounts of the facts upon which the religion reſted, this reception would be a valid proof, that theſe books muſt have accorded with what the apoſtles taught. Their *early exiſtence*, and *reputation* is made out by antient teſtimony; beſides, that two of the goſpels fix the time and ſituation of their authors; and the third purports to have been written by the author of the "Acts," who declares himſelf to have been the companion of one of the original preachers of the religion. P. 164—7.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

Of the authenticity of the Hiſtorical Scriptures, in eleven Sections. P. 168.

PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS.

I. WE are able to produce a great number of antient manuſcripts found in different countries, all anterior to the art of printing, together with verſions of great antiquity, in languages which have not been ſpoken for many ages; which prove, that the ſcriptures were not of modern contrivance, and were long ago much read and ſought after. P. 169.

II. The language of the New Teſtament is ſuited to the age, and the ſituation of the apoſtles. It is Greek coming from Hebrew origin, and abounds with Hebrew, and Syriac Idioms. P. 171.

III. The miraculous relations contained in theſe books do not directly affect the queſtion of their genuineneſs. The works of Bede exhibit many wonderful relations, yet no one doubts whether they were written by him. P. 172.

IV. Had it been eaſy to have forged the Chriſtian writings, it is probable, that ſome would have appeared under the ſanction of the name of Chriſt himſelf; as in the unſucceſsful attempt of the epiſtle of Chriſt to Abgarus, which was not mentioned by any writer during the three firſt centuries. P. 174.

V. If the aſcription of the goſpels, to their reſpective anthors, had been conjectural, they would have been aſcribed to more eminent men. P. 175.

VI. Chriſtian writers and churches ſoon agreed on this ſubject. The diverſity of opinion in other points, and concurrence in this, ſeems to ſuppoſe it to have been the reſult of private and free inquiry. P. 176.

SECT.

SECT. I.

The hiſtorical books of the New Teſtament are quoted, or alluded to, by a ſeries of Chriſtian writers, proceeding in regular ſucceſſion from the time of the Apoſtles to the preſent. P. 183.

THE medium of proof, in this propoſition, is unqueſtionable. Biſhop Burnet, in his hiſtory, inſerts extracts from Lord Clarendon's hiſtory. One ſuch inſertion proves, that Clarendon's hiſtory was extant when the Biſhop wrote, and had been read, and received by him as authentic.

TESTIMONIES.

I. In the epiſtle aſcribed to Barnabas, we have this paſſage; "Let us beware leſt it come on us, *as it is written*, "there are many called, few choſen." Hence we infer, that the author lived, when there was a book extant, and well known among the Chriſtians, containing the words, "*many are called, few choſen:*" in Matthew's goſpel they are twice found, and in no other book now known. The phraſe, *as it is written*, denotes the author to have been a Jew; it was the form the Jews uſed in quoting their ſcriptures. In this epiſtle there are ſeveral other paſſages found in St. Matthew's goſpel. P. 184—7.

II. We have an epiſtle written by Clement, a contemporary of St. Paul, in which the *words of Chriſt*, as recorded by the evangeliſts, are quoted with great reſpect, veneration, and without any doubt whether they were the real words of Chriſt. P. 187—90.

Objection. As Clement hath *not* uſed words of quotation, it is not certain that he refers to any book whatever. Anſwer. (1.) He, without any reference, uſes

a paſſage *manifeſtly taken* from the Epiſtle to the Romans. (2.) There are many ſentences of St. Paul to the Corinthians, ſtanding in Clement's epiſtle, without any ſign of quotation. (3.) This method of adopting words of ſcripture, without acknowledgement, was in general uſe. But admitting that Clement had theſe words from the apoſtles, or firſt teachers of Chriſtianity, ſtill the ſcriptures contain what the apoſtles taught. P. 191—3.

III. At the concluſion of the Epiſtle to the Romans St. Paul ſays, "Salute Hermas," &c. Probably the author of the *Shepherd of Hermas*, in which are ſtriking alluſions to the goſpels of Matthew, Luke, and John. P. 193—5.

IV. Ignatius became Biſhop of Antioch 37 years after Chriſt's aſcenſion; in his epiſtles are undoubted alluſions to the goſpels of Matthew and John, but not marked as quotations. P. 195—7.

V. Polycarp, who had been taught by the apoſtles, and converſed with many who had ſeen Chriſt, has nearly forty alluſions to the New Teſtament in one ſhort epiſtle; ſeveral of them quoted without heſitation, as the words of Chriſt. P. 197—200.

VI. Papias, a hearer of John, aſcribes the reſpective goſpels to Matthew; and Mark mentions the materials from which he collected his account, and in what language Matthew wrote. Hence it is certain, that theſe books, at that time, bore theſe names. P. 200.

VII. Juſtin Martyr, who came twenty years after, has ſeveral diſtinct and copious extracts from the goſpels and Acts. In all his works there are but two inſtances, in which he refers to any thing, as ſaid or done by Chriſt, which is not related in our goſpels. All his references ſuppoſe the books notorious, and that there were no other accounts of Chriſt received and credited. P. 202—6.

VIII.

VIII. Hegeſippus, who came 30 years after Juſtin, ſays, that, in his journey from Paleſtine to Rome, "in "every city the ſame doctrine was taught, which the "law, and the prophets, and the Lord teacheth." P. 207.

IX. About the year 170, the churches of Lyons, and Vienna ſent an account of their ſufferings to Aſia. Pothinus their Biſhop, being at that time 90 years old, his early life muſt have joined on with the times of the apoſtles. In this epiſtle there are exact references to the goſpels of Luke and John, and to the Acts of the Apoſtles. P. 208.

X. Irenæus, ſucceſſor to Pothinus, gives poſitive teſtimony to the books of the New Teſtament. He aſſerts that the ſtory which the goſpels exhibit, is the ſtory which the apoſtles told; and that the goſpels were written, "*as the foundation and pillar of our faith;*" he then deſcribes the authors, and the origin of their hiſtories. By another paſſage it appears, that in his time, there were *four*, and *only four* goſpels; which by his references were thoſe which we have; his teſtimony to the Acts is generally explicit. P. 209—13.

Remark. The teſtimony of theſe perſons, is the concurring teſtimony of writers, who lived in countries remote from one another: Clement flouriſhed at Rome; Ignatius at Antioch; Polycarp at Smyrna; Juſtin Martyr in Syria; and Irenæus in France. P. 214.

XI. In the works of Athenagoras are clear references to Mark and Luke. And in thoſe of Theophilus evident alluſions to Matthew and John. Clement of Alexandria, who followed Irenæus, at the diſtance of 16 years, gives an account of the order in which the four goſpels were written, mentions the names of their reſpective authors, and aſcribes the *Acts* to St. Luke. P. 214—17.

XII. Tertullian, joins on with Clement, who ſays, "among the *Apoſtles*, John and Matthew *teach* the "faith; among *apoſtolical men*, Luke and Mark *refreſh* "it." Hence the number of the gòſpels, and the names of the evangeliſts. He affords alſo a complete atteſtation to the authority of *our* books, by enumerating the churches which received them; the Acts of the Apoſtles he calls Luke's commentary. P. 218—20.

XIII. During an interval of 30 years, we have the fragments of ſeveral writers, in all of which there is ſome reference to the goſpels; and in Hippolytus, there is an abſtract of the goſpel hiſtory. Afterwards we come to Origen, whoſe declaration is peremptory, he ſays "the four goſpels are received, without diſpute, by the "whole church of God under heaven:" he ſubjoins alſo a hiſtory of the reſpective authors, and cenſures the Apochryphal goſpel. P. 221—3.

XIV. Gregory and Dionyſius were ſcholars of Origen, their teſtimony is but a repetition of his. In the writings of Cyprian, who flouriſhed 20 years after Origen, there are copious citations from the ſcriptures. P. 224.

XV. In the next 40 years, the remains of a crowd of writers are to be met with, in which the hiſtorical ſcriptures are always cited with profound reſpect. The teſtimony of Victorin is poſitive. P. 225.

XVI. Arnobius and Lactantius, about the year 300, in defending Chriſtianity, derive their arguments from our goſpel. P. 226.

XVII. Euſebius, who flouriſhed about the year 315, compoſed a hiſtory of Chriſtianity, in which he gives quotations from each evangeliſt, and makes remarks upon their writings. From this time the works of Chriſtian writers are full of references to the New Teſtament. P. 227—9.

SECT.

SECT. II.

The Scriptures are quoted with peculiar reſpect, as books poſſeſſing an authority belonging to no others, and as concluſive in all matters of controverſy. P. 230.

TESTIMONIES.

(1.) THEOHPILUS, Biſhop of Antioch, ſpeaking of the prophets, and *goſpels*, ſays, *all* being inſpired, ſpoke by one, and the ſame ſpirit of God. (2.) A writer, about 158 years after the publication of the ſcriptures, calls them *divine*. P. 231. (3.) Hippolitus, in quoting the books of the New Teſtament, profeſſes "to draw "out of the *ſacred fountain*." (4.) *Our* aſſertions, ſaith Origen, are unworthy of credit, we *muſt* receive the *ſcriptures* as witneſſes. P. 232. (5.) Cyprian exhorts the Chriſtian teachers to go back to the *fountain*; —to recur to the *goſpels*, and apoſtolic writings. P. 233. (6.) Novatus ſays, the ſcripture detects and confutes fraud; but never deceives. (7.) Anatolius calls the ſcriptures *divine*. P. 234. (8.) The Arians rejected certain phraſes, becauſe they were not in ſcripture, and one of them ſays to Auguſtine, "if you alledge any "thing from the *divine ſcriptures*, I *muſt* hear." And Athanaſius calls the ſcriptures the *fountains of ſalvation*. P. 235. (9.) Cyril ſays, "concerning the faith, not the "leaſt article ought to be delivered without the *divine* "*ſcriptures*." P. 236. Epiphanius, Phæbadius, Baſil, Ephraim, and Jerome, all teſtify to the ſame purport. P. 236—8.

SECT. III.

The Scriptures were, in very early times, collected into a diſtinct volume. P. 239.

(1.) THE term *goſpel* is probably uſed by Ignatius, for a collection of writings, as oppoſed to the *prophets*. Clement of Alexandria commonly expreſſed the writings of the New Teſtament by theſe two names, "*the goſ-*" *pels, and apoſtles.*" P. 239—41. (2.) Euſebius ſays, that Quadratus and others, the immediate ſucceſſors of the apoſtles, in their travels, *carried the goſpels with them.* P. 242. (3.) Irenæus refers to a *collection* of Chriſtian ſacred writings. (4.) Melito ſpeaks of the *Old* Teſtament; hence it is deduced, that there was *then* a *collection* of writings called the *New* Teſtament. P. 243. (5.) Clement's teſtimony has been mentioned. (6.) Tertullian divides the Chriſtian ſcriptures into the *goſpels* and *apoſtles*, and calls the whole volume, the New Teſtament. (7.) The ſame diviſion is referred to, by many writers of the third century. (8.) Euſebius took ſome pains to ſhew, that John's goſpel had been *juſtly* placed *fourth* in order. Hence the four goſpels had been collected. P. 245.

SECT. IV.

Our Scriptures were ſoon diſtinguiſhed by appropriate titles of reſpect. P. 247.

POLYCARP calls them the *holy ſcriptures*;—Juſtin Martyr, the goſpels;—Dionyſius, the *ſcripture of the Lord*;—Irenæus ſtyles them the *divine ſcriptures*, *divine oracles*;—Matthew's goſpel is called by Theophilus,

lus, "*the evangelic voice;*"—Clement ſtyles the New Teſtament, "*the divinely inſpired ſcriptures;*"—Origen ſpeaks of the "*Old and New Scriptures;*"—By Cyprian they are called the books *of the ſpirit.* Hence the peculiar reſpect paid to the ſcriptures. P. 247—51.

SECT. V.

Our Scriptures were uſed in the public religious aſſemblies of the early Chriſtians. P. 252.

(1.) Juſtin ſpeaking of the Chriſtian worſhip, ſays, "*the memoirs of the apoſtles are read,*" &c. which elſewhere he calls the goſpels. (2.) Tertullian, on the ſame ſubject, ſays, we come together "*to recollect the divine "ſcriptures.*" P. 253. (3.) At Paleſtine, Origen was deſired to expound the ſcriptures *publicly.* (4.) Cyprian ſays, "the *goſpel of Chriſt* ſhould be read in the church." P. 254. (5.) Auguſtine mentions the reading of the ſcriptures, as the *advantage* of the Chriſtian religion. P. 255.

SECT. VI.

Commentaries were antiently written upon the ſcriptures; harmonies formed out of them; copies collated, and verſions made into different languages. P. 257.

(1.) TALIAN, about the year 170, compoſed a harmony of the *goſpels*, entitled "*of the four.*" (2.) and (3.) Pantænus, and Clement wrote explications of the Old and New Teſtament. P. 258. (4.) Tertullian appeals from a later verſion to the authentic Greek. (5.) An

An anonymous author appeals to the *antient copies* of the ſcriptures. (6.) Euſebius refers to ſeveral writers as the *interpreters* of the ſcriptures. P. 259. (7.) Julius Africanus wrote upon the genealogies in Matthew and Luke. Ammonius compoſed a harmony of the four goſpels; and Origen wrote commentaries on moſt of the books in the New Teſtament. P. 260. (8.) Dionyſius harmonized the accounts of the reſurrection. Lucius, and Heſychius put forth *editions* of the New Teſtament. P. 261. (9.) The fourth century ſupplies fourteen writers on the books of the New Teſtament. At the beginning of this century, Euſebius wrote upon the *diſcrepancies* of the goſpels. Damaſus correſponded with Jerome on the difficult paſſages of ſcripture. Gregory of Nyſen undertook to reconcile the accounts of the reſurrection. Numerous other commentators ſucceeded. A Syriac verſion is now extant, which, as Syriac was the language of Paleſtine, when Chriſtianity was firſt eſtabliſhed, is probably very antient; it wants the 2d of Peter, 2d and 3d of John, and the book of Revelation; in other reſpects it differs little from our text. P. 262—7.

SECT. VII.

The ſcriptures were received, and appealed to, by different ſects of Chriſtians. P. 268.

(1.) BASILIDES, who lived about the year 120, rejected the Jewiſh inſtitution, and oppoſed the general doctrine of the Chriſtian church; yet admitted the goſpel by Matthew. P. 269. (2.) The Valentinians, about the ſame time, applied to the *evangelic*, and *apoſtolic* writings. P. 270. (3.) The Carpocratians are charged with perverting a paſſage in Matthew, which proves, that

that they *received* that goſpel. P. 271. (4.) Several other ſects of heretics, between the years 150 and 200, admitted the ſcriptures of the New Teſtament. (5.) Tatian, a founder of a ſect, made a harmony of the goſpels. (6.) Thoſe who contended for the *mere humanity* of Chriſt, argued from the ſcriptures. P. 272. (7.) The *advocates*, and *adverſaries* of Origen's opinions, acknowledged the authority of the ſcriptures. (8.) Paul of Sarmoſata is not charged with rejecting any book of the New Teſtament. P. 273. (9.) The Sabellians, in an oppoſite extreme to Paul, received *all* the ſcriptures. P. 274. (10.) The teſtimony of a Biſhop of Carthage, is, that the heretics, who *pervert the ſcripures*, ought to be execrated. (11.) The Millenium, &c. divided the opinions of Chriſtians, yet every one appealed to the ſcriptures. P. 275. (12.) The Donatiſts uſed the ſame ſcriptures as we do. (13.) In the Arian controverſy *both ſides* appealed to the ſame ſcriptures. P. 277. (14.) The Priſcillianiſts, and Pelagians received our ſcriptures. (15.) The teſtimony of Chryſoſtom, is, "that though many hereſies have ariſen, yet all have "received the goſpels, either entire or in part." P. 278. Marcion rejected the Old Teſtament, and every paſſage in the New, which recognized the Jewiſh ſcriptures; but he publiſhed a chaſtiſed edition of St. Luke's goſpel. P. 280.

SECT.

SECT. VIII.

The four Goſpels, the Acts, thirteen Epiſtles of St. Paul, the 1ſt of John, and the 1ſt of Peter, were received by thoſe who doubted concerning other parts of our canon. P. 283.

(1.) JEROME relates, that the Epiſtle to the Hebrews was not received as St. Paul's, by the Romans. (2.) Origen ſpeaks doubtfully of the Epiſtle to the Hebrews, and the 2d of Peter, and the 2d and 3d of John, and then he quotes thoſe parts which were undoubted. P. 284. (3.) Dionyſius has his doubts concerning the book of the Revelation, but entertains no ſuſpicion of the authenticity of the four goſpels. P. 285. (4.) Euſebius treats of the ſcriptures which are *univerſally acknowledged*, and of thoſe which are *not ſo*. Among the *former*, he ranks the Goſpels, Acts, the Epiſtles of St. Paul, the 1ſt of John, and the 1ſt of Peter. This opinion appears to have been founded upon the teſtimony of writers whom Euſebius, and his contemporaries, called *Ancients*. P. 286—91.

SECT. IX.

Our hiſtorical Scriptures were conſidered, by the early Adverſaries of Chriſtianity, as containing the Accounts upon which the Religion was founded. P. 292.

(1.) CELSUS, in the ſecond century, writing againſt Chriſtianity, alludes to books, written by the diſciples of Jeſus. He accuſes the Chriſtians of *altering the goſpel*, which refers to ſome variations; but *various readings* do not occur in *modern* publications; he ſays, his

his arguments were from *their own writings*, evidently referring to the goſpels. Celſus refers to no *ſpurious* goſpels. P. 292—7. (2.) Porphyry, in the third century, gave a large treatiſe againſt Chriſtianity. He thought, by overthrowing the Goſpels, and the Acts, that he ſhould overthrow the religion itſelf. Speaking of Matthew he calls him *your* evangeliſt. P. 298. (3.) Julian, in the fourth century, mentions Matthew and Luke by name;—recites the ſayings of Chriſt in the very words of the Evangeliſts;—ſtates the early dates of theſe records;—and calls them by the names they now bear, without queſtioning their genuineneſs. P. 300—3.

SECT. X.

Formal Catalogues of authentic Scriptures were publiſhed, in all which our preſent ſacred Hiſtories were included. P. 304.

ENUMERATIONS of this kind are given by Origen, Athanaſius, and Cyril. In the latter the book of Revelation is omitted; as it is alſo in an authoritative catalogue of canonical ſcriptures delivered by the council of Laodicea. Other catalogues are given by other writers about the ſame period, in which no books are admitted beſides thoſe we now receive. P. 305—7.

SECT. XI.

The above Propoſitions cannot be predicated of the Apocryphal Books of the New Teſtament. P. 309.

(1.) NO Chriſtian Hiſtory, beſides our Goſpels, and the Acts, claiming to be written by an *Apoſtle*, or *Apoſtolic Man*, is quoted within 300 years after the birth of Chriſt. An Hebrew Goſpel may ſeem to form an exception; it is *once* mentioned by Clement, and *twice* by Origen, with marks of diſcredit. P. 309—11. (2.) Of apocryphal writings only *two* are mentioned in the three firſt centuries, without expreſs terms of condemnation. P. 312. We may alſo add, (1.) That there is no evidence, that any *apocryphal books* exiſted in the firſt century, in which century *all our* hiſtorical books are proved to have been extant. (2.) Theſe apocryphal writings were *not* read in the churches. (3.) Were not admitted into their volume. (4.) They do not appear in their catalogues. (5.) Were not noticed by their adverſaries. (6.) Nor referred to by different parties. (7.) They were not the ſubjects of commentaries, &c. (8.) And they were rejected by Chriſtian writers in ſucceeding ages. But all theſe books go upon the ſame fundamental hiſtory of Chriſt, as that of our Scriptures; they are not contradictions, but unauthorized additions to our hiſtories. P. 314—17.

CHAP. X.

RECAPITULATION.

THERE are two points which form the ſubject of our diſcuſſion.

Firſt, The founder of Chriſtianity, his aſſociates, and followers, paſſed their lives in labours, and ſufferings.

Secondly, They did ſo in atteſtation of the miraculous hiſtory recorded in our ſcriptures.

The *former* is rendered highly probable, from the nature of the undertaking;—the characters employed;—the oppoſition of their tenets to the doctrine of the country;—their condemnation of all other religions;—and their want of authority. The probability is encreaſed, by the fate of the founder, and the firſt converts atteſted by Heathen writers; and is advanced to *hiſtorical* certainty by the evidence of our own books. P. 320.

That it was *for* a miraculous ſtory is manifeſt;—becauſe the deſignation of Jeſus, as Meſſiah, could have nothing but miracles to ſtand on. That the exertions of the apoſtles were for the ſtory which we have *now*, is proved, by the ſtory being tranſmitted to us by *two* of their own number; and by *two* others perſonally connected with them; therefore, if any one of theſe accounts be genuine it is ſufficient; and their genuineneſs is made out, by the general arguments which evince the genuineneſs of other antient writings, viz. by the citations from them in writings belonging to a period contiguous to that in which they were publiſhed;—by the regard paid to them by the early Chriſtians;—by an univerſal agreement with reſpect to theſe books;—by contending ſects appealing to them;—and by a *defect*

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of this evidence to other hiſtories on the ſame ſubject. P. 323.

But the *ſtrict* genuineneſs of theſe books is *not*, perhaps, neceſſary to the ſupport of the propoſition. If we did *not* know who were the authors of the four goſpels; —yet, if they were received as authentic accounts at, or near the time of the apoſtles;—if they corroborated each others teſtimony;—if they are corroborated by a contemporary hiſtory;—confirmed by the Epiſtles from the Apoſtles; and this connected with the reflection, that if the apoſtles delivered any other ſtory it is loſt; it is ſufficient to prove, that this is the ſtory told by the apoſtles, for which they acted and ſuffered. P. 325. If it be ſo, the religion muſt be *true*. Theſe men could *not* be deceivers. By an oppoſite conduct they might have lived *quietly*. In ſuch circumſtances men would not pretend to have ſeen, what they never ſaw, nor aſſert facts of which they had no knowledge, when they were aware the conſequences would be danger and death. P. 327.

PROP.

PROPOSITION II. *That there is* NOT *ſatisfactory evidence, that perſons pretending to be the original witneſſes of any other ſimilar miracles, have acted in the ſame manner, in atteſtation of the accounts which they delivered, and ſolely in conſequence of their belief of the truth of theſe accounts.* P. 330.

In comparing our evidence, with that of our adverſaries, the diſtinctions are of two kinds; thoſe which relate to *proofs;*—and thoſe which relate to *miracles.* Under the *former* head, we may *lay out of the caſe,*

I. Such accounts of ſupernatural events, as are found *only* in hiſtories by ſome ages poſterior to the tranſaction. *Ours* is contemporary hiſtory. This difference removes the miraculous hiſtory of Pythagoras;—the prodigies of Livy's hiſtory;—the fables of heroic ages;—the Greek, Roman, and Gothic Mythology;—and the legendary hiſtory of Popiſh ſaints. It applies to the miracles of Apollonius Tyaneus; and to ſome of the third century. P. 333.

II. Accounts publiſhed in one country of what happened in a diſtant country. In the caſe of Chriſtianity, the ſtory was publiſhed in the place in which it was acted. This diſtinction diſpoſes of the miracles of Apollonius Tyaneus, ſaid to have been performed in India; thoſe of Francis Xavier, and many others. P. 336.

III. We may lay out of the caſe *tranſient* rumours. Future confirmation, permanency, increaſing in notoriety, and ſubſequent independent accounts, are principles which muſt diſtinguiſh ſolid truth, from fugitive lies. P. 337.

IV. *Naked* hiſtory may be laid out of the caſe. If we had no viſible effects connected with the hiſtory, no ſubſequent

ſubſequent or collateral teſtimony to confirm it, it would not be deſerving of credit. This is not our caſe. The books are combined with the inſtitution; with the religion of *this* day; with the time and place of its origen; and with the circumſtances of its riſe and progreſs. P. 338.

V. A mark of hiſtorical truth, is *particularity* in names, dates, places, &c. ſuch is the deſcription of St. Paul's voyage and ſhipwreck. The cure and examination of the blind man in John's goſpel, and many other examples in the four goſpels. P. 340.

VI. We may lay out of the caſe, ſtories upon which nothing depends; in which no intereſt is involved; and nothing to be done, or changed in conſequence of believing them. Nothing *depends* upon the truth, or falſehood of moſt vulgar errors and popular ſuperſtitions. But the miracles of Chriſt claimed to regulate the opinions of mankind, and to decide the moſt important queſtion that can agitate the human mind. It did not ſtop at *opinions*, but they who believed Chriſtianity *acted* upon it. P. 342.

VII. We have laid out of the caſe, accounts which merely come in *affirmance* of opinions already formed. Popiſh miracles, happen in Popiſh countries, and make no converts. They like other arguments *confirm* what was believed before. Men are eaſily fortified in their old opinions; driven *from* them with difficulty. The Chriſtian miracles, were wrought in the midſt of enemies; they made converts, who gave up to the teſtimony, their moſt favourite prejudices. There was no *anterior* perſuaſion to lay hold of. The miracles of Jeſus gave birth to the ſect. Frauds might mix themſelves with the *progreſs*, but could not take place in the *commencement* of the religion. P. 345—8.

Of

Of the diſtinctions which relate to the miracles themſelves, the following ſhould be carefully retained. P. 351.

I. It is not neceſſary to admit as a miracle, what can be reſolved into a *falſe perception.* Of this nature, was the *demon of Socrates;* the viſions of St. Anthony, and Col. Gardiner, which may be accounted for, by a momentary inſanity; theſe appearances are *ſolitary*, momentary, and without permanent effects. But the blind reſtored to ſight, or a dead man to life, leaves an abiding effect; the miracle may be ſudden, but the proof remains. P. 351. There are others of a *mixed* nature, in which the *principal* miracle is momentary, but ſome circumſtance combined with it is permanent, as Peter's viſion preparatory to the call of Cornelius. The *viſion* might be a dream, the meſſage ſent by Cornelius could not. Either taken ſeparately might be a deluſion; the concurrence of the two was impoſſible without a ſupernatural cauſe. P. 355.

II. It is not neceſſary to bring into the compariſon, *tentative* miracles, i. e. where, out of a great number of trials, ſome ſucceed. This obſervation applies to antient oracles, to cures wrought by relics, at the tombs of ſaints; to the efficacy of the King's touch; but not to the miracles of the goſpel. P. 358.

III. We may diſmiſs all accounts, in which, allowing the fact to be true, it remains *doubtful* whether a miracle were wrought. Such as the extraordinary obſtructions to the rebuilding of Jeruſalem by Julian; the liquefaction of St. Januarius's blood at Naples, &c. This diſtinction applies to all narratives of cures in nervous complaints, and of all diſeaſes affected by the imagination. P. 361.

IV. To

IV. To the ſame head of objection may be referred *ſtories* which can be reſolved into exaggeration. The miracles of the goſpel cannot be explained away in this manner. The feeding 5000 with a few loaves and fiſhes ſurpaſſes all bounds of exaggeration. The raiſing of Lazarus from the dead comes not within the compaſs of miſrepreſentation. P. 363. Removing from the compariſon the caſes fairly diſpoſed of by theſe obſervations, many will not remain. To thoſe which do remain, we apply this diſtinction: "That there is not ſa-"tisfactory evidence, &c." P. 367. See Prop. II.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

Conſideration of ſome ſpecific inſtances related by Mr. Hume. P. 369.

I. THE cure of the blind, and lame man at Alexandria, by Veſpaſian, as related by Tacitus, who wrote his account 27 years after the miracle is ſaid to have been performed. He wrote at Rome of what paſſed at Alexandria; and he does not appear to have *examined*, or to have believed it. It labours under the ſuſpicion of having been concerted between the patient, the phyſician, and the emperor; it was calculated to confer honour upon the emperor, and the god Serapis; it was atchieved in the midſt of the emperor's followers, and flatterers; and in a city devoted to his intereſt, and that of the God. P. 370.

II. The reſtoration of the limb of an attendant in the Spaniſh church, as told by Cardinal de Retz; but it appears that the Cardinal did not believe the ſtory; he ſeems not to have examined into the fact; and it is eaſy to conceive that ſuch a ſtory, managed by the prieſts, and backed by their authority, would obtain credit with the ignorant populace. P. 375.

III. The miracles ſaid to have been wrought at the tomb of the Abbè Paris. The patients were ſo affected by their devotion, their expectation, the place, and by the ſympathy of the multitude, that many were thrown into convulſions, which, in certain circumſtances, might produce a removal of diſorders depending upon obſtruction. Similar effects have been experienced by the operations of animal magnetiſm.——And the circumſtances which indicate this explication, in the caſe of the Pariſian miracles, are, (1.) Theſe miracles were *tentative;* out of many thouſands, the hiſtory contains but *nine*

cures. (2.) The convulsions at the tomb are admitted. (3.) The diseases chiefly depended upon inaction, and obstruction. (4.) The cures were gradual. (5.) They were incomplete. (6.) Others were temporary: and some of the cases do not require this solution.——The cause *for* which these miracles were wrought did not rise, but sink. In none of these instances, was the miracle unequivocal;—by none, were established prejudices overthrown;—of none of them, did the credit make its way in opposition to authority, and power, and by none of them, were many induced to a life of labour and sufferings. P. 377---83.

VOL. II.

PART THE SECOND.

OF THE AUXILIARY EVIDENCES OF CHRISTIANITY.

CHAP. I.

PROPHECY. Iſaiah lii. 13. liii. Theſe words are extant in a book, purporting to contain the predictions of a writer who lived ſeven centuries before the Chriſtian Æra. It is certain, that they were either written, or ſpoken before the fact took place, to which they are applied. P. 1—4. The quotation is from a writing *declaredly prophetic;* profeſſing to deſcribe ſuch future changes in the world as were connected with the fate and intereſts of the Jewiſh nation. It is intermixed with no other ſubject. Its application to the evangelic hiſtory is plain and appropriate. P. 4—7. The *antient* Rabbins explained it of their expected Meſſiah, but the *modern* expoſitors refer it to the calamitous ſtate of the Jewiſh nation. The deſcription in the ſeventh verſe, "he was oppreſſed, yet he opened not his mouth, &c." anſwers to no part of the Jewiſh hiſtory. The mention of the *Grave*, and the *Tomb*, is not applicable to the

fortunes of a nation; ſtill leſs, that part of the prophecy which repreſents the ſufferings as *voluntary*. P. 7—11.

II. Another argument is founded upon our Lord's prediction concerning the deſtruction of Jeruſalem, recorded by *three* of the evangeliſts. See Luke xxi. 5—25 Mat. xxiv. and Mark xiii. Theſe paſſages are direct, and explicit predictions. The general agreement of the *deſcription*, with the *event*, has been ſhewn by many writers. The only queſtion is, whether the prophecy was delivered *before* the event. P. 13—17. And, (1.) The judgment of antiquity *concurs* in aſſigning the three goſpels a date prior to the deſtruction of Jeruſalem. (2.) The evangeliſts who wrote them muſt have been far advanced in life, when Jeruſalem was taken, and no reaſon has been given why they ſhould defer writing their hiſtories ſo long. (3.) Had the event been accompliſhed when the predictions were recorded, ſome hints about the completion, would probably have been dropped. P. 18. (4.) The admonitions which Chriſt is ſaid to have given his followers, to ſave themſelves by flight, is not eaſily accounted for, if the prophecy had been fabricated *after* the event. P. 20. (5.) If it had been compoſed after the event, there would have been more ſpecification of perſons and incidents. P. 21.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

The morality of the Goſpel.

TWO points are to be conceded. *Firſt*, that the teaching of morality was not the primary deſign of Chriſt's miſſion, but the eſtabliſhing a *proof* of a future ſtate. Secondly, that morality being the reſult of the experience of the effects produced by certain actions, cannot be a ſubject of *diſcovery*. Still the morality of the Goſpel is extraordinary, conſidering from whom it came. P. 24—8.

The ſubject divides itſelf into *things taught*, and the *manner* of teaching.

I. The Goſpel *omits* ſome qualities which have uſually engaged the admiration of mankind, ſuch as friendſhip, patriotiſm, and and active courage.

II. It has brought forward ſome virtues, commonly overlooked and contemned;—as paſſive courage, patience under injuries, &c. P. 29. The characters which poſſeſs the *former* qualities have ever been the favourites of mankind: with Chriſt thoſe who poſſeſſed the *latter* were ſubjects of commendation. P. 29—32. (1.) If the *latter* diſpoſition were *univerſal*, the world would be a ſociety of friends. If the *former*, it would produce a ſcene of univerſal confuſion. (2.) If the diſpoſition be *partial*, in the *ſame proportion*, it prevents the great ſources of human miſery. Without this diſpoſition, enmities once begun, muſt be eternal. P. 33—6. The preference of the *patient*, to the *heroic* character, is peculiar to the Chriſtian inſtitution. P. 37.

II. A ſecond argument, drawn from the morality of the New Teſtament, is the ſtreſs laid upon the regulation of the thonghts. This conſideration is connected with the other: *that* related to the *malicious*, *this* to the

the *voluptuous* paſſions. Together they comprehend the whole character. A moral ſyſtem which prohibits *actions*, but not *thoughts*, muſt be ineffectual. P. 37—40.

III. By the Chriſtian ſyſtem we are taught to refer our actions to the will of the Creator; and conſtantly to have in view the happineſs of thoſe about us. The *firſt* direction ſuggeſts a motive which acts ſteadily and uniformly. By the *ſecond*, all ſelfiſhneſs in the human character is corrected. P. 40. The ſame ſpirit appears in the writings of the apoſtles; and in the Epiſtle of Clement, and other apoſtolical fathers. P. 45—8.

IV. The morality of the goſpel is diſtinguiſhed by an excluſion of regard to fame and reputation. Mat. vi. 1, 6. Oſtentation, not publicity, is prohibited—not the *mode*, but the *motive* of the action which is regarded. P. 48.

We next conſider the *manner* of our Saviour's teaching. P. 51.

His leſſons did not conſiſt of diſquiſitions. His precepts were not accompanied with *proofs*, or *arguments*; but were ſententious, and ſuited to the character he aſſumed as a meſſenger from God. His teaching aimed at *impreſſion*. *Conviction* was to ariſe from a reſpect to his authority. P. 52. This mode of inſtruction was the moſt proper, conſidering the ſhortneſs of his miniſtry, and the difficulties attending it. P. 53. By this mode of inſtruction, *rules* are conceived in general terms; the application is left to the reaſon of the hearer. A *ſpecific* compliance with the precepts would be of little value; the *diſpoſition* which they inculcate is of the higheſt. P. 55.

Objection. But this diſpoſition is unattainable. Anſwer:—So is all perfection. Should imperfection, therefore, be recommended? Our Saviour's rules can never be ſo miſtaken as to do harm. P. 56. The parables of the New Teſtament would do honour to any book. P. 58.

The

The Lord's prayer is without an equal or a rival. Whence had this man this wiſdom? P. 59.

The *negative* character of our Lord's diſcourſes deſerves to be conſidered. (1.) They exhibit no particular deſcription of the inviſible world; this repels the ſuſpicion of enthuſiaſm. The teacher, whoſe principal purpoſe is to draw attention to *himſelf*, is full of it; witneſs the Koran. P. 60. (2.) Our Lord enjoined no auſterities. P. 62. (3.) He uttered no impaſſioned devotion. The Lord's prayer is a model of calm devotion. His words in the garden are unaffected expreſſions of deep, but ſober piety. P. 63. (4.) He does not ſubſtitute fervency, in the place of regular morality. P. 64. (5.) He did not fall in with the faſhions of his country, or the natural bias of his own education. P. 65. (6.) In our Saviour's apothegms, there is no example of ſophiſtry, and falſe ſubtilty. (7.) The national temper of the Jews was narrow-minded: the leſſons of Jeſus were the moſt enlarged benevolence. P. 67. (8.) His religion was abſtracted from all views of eccleſiaſtical or civil policy. Chriſtianity declines all queſtions upon government; it is applicable to all forms; as it tends to make men virtuous;—as it ſtates obedience to government, in *ordinary caſes*, to be a duty of conſcience;—as it induces a ſpirit favourable to public tranquillity;—and as it prays for communities, and their governors, of all denominations. P. 68. A religion, with ſuch qualities, would have been thought extraordinary coming from any perſon; exceedingly ſo from him, from whom it did come. Suppoſe the *miſſion* to be *real*, all is accounted for. But without reality it is very difficult to explain. Chriſt was not like any other carpenter; the apoſtles were not like any other fiſhermen. P. 73.

The

The *character of Chriſt* is part of the morality of the goſpel. (1.) He is charged with no vice by friends, or enemies. Some ſtain or other attaches to almoſt all other teachers of morals. P. 75. (2.) In every narrative of Jeſus, we perceive traces of devotion, humility, patience, &c. which qualities are to be collected from incidents. His *devoutneſs*, from his frequent retirement to ſolitary prayer;—his *humility*, from his endeavours to check contentions among his diſciples for ſuperiority;—his *benignity*, from his kindneſs to children, from the tears he ſhed over his country, and upon the death of his friend, &c.;—his *mildneſs*, in his rebuke to his diſciples at the Samaritan village; and in his prayer for his enemies;—his *prudence* in his conduct upon trifling queſtions. P. 78. The beſt deſcriptions of virtue are to be found in the New Teſtament. P. 82. The whole volume is replete with piety, and with devotional virtues, which were ſcarcely known to Heathen moraliſts. P. 83.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

The candour of the writers of the New Teſtament.

THIS candour conſiſts in noticing many circumſtances which no writer *would* have forged, or would have inſerted, had he thought himſelf at liberty to *mould* the particulars of that ſtory according to his choice. For example, (1.) Relating unanimouſly, that Chriſt's appearances, after his reſurrection were to his diſciples *alone*, and not attempting to conceal this, at firſt ſight, unfavourable circumſtance. P. 85—7. (2.) John the Baptiſt's meſſage ſtating his doubts, concerning the character of Chriſt, muſt have afforded handle to cavil and objection. The ſame obſervation holds concerning the apoſtacy of Judas. P. 88.——John vi. 66. "*From that* "*time many of his diſciples went back, and walked no* "*more with him.*" Was it the part of a writer who dealt in diſguiſe to put down this anecdote? or this—"*He* "*did not many mighty works there, becauſe of their un-* "*belief.*" See alſo, Mat. v. 17, 18. Acts xxv. 19. and Acts viii. 14. P. 90. Laſtly, where do we find leſs diſpoſition to magnify, than where Paul is ſaid to have preached from morning to night; and adds, and ſome believed the things ſpoken, and ſome believed not? Mat. xxi. 21. carries with it a difficulty, which no writer would have brought upon himſelf officiouſly. P. 92. The anſwer of Chriſt, to him who wiſhed firſt to go and bury his father, though very *expreſſive* of the importance of religion, was harſh, repulſive, and ſuch as would not have been *made* for Chriſt. P. 93. The anſwer to Mary, "*Touch me not, &c.*" probably referred to a former converſation, for want of knowing which, the meaning is hidden from us; the obſcurity is a proof of genuineneſs. P. 94. John vi. labours under obſcurity,

which renders it unlikely to have been fabricated. P. 95. The account of the inſtitution of the euchariſt bears internal marks of genuineneſs, had it been feigned, it would have been more full and formal. P. 96. The writers of the goſpel diſcover no deceit, or cunning; uſe no precaution to obviate objections; they appear to tell the truth, and attend to nothing elſe. P. 98. Add alſo the extreme *naturalneſs* of ſome things related in the New Teſtament. Mark ix. 24. The ſtruggle in the father's breaſt between ſolicitude for his child, and an involuntary diſtruſt in the power of Chriſt, is expreſſed with an air of reality which could hardly be *counterfeited*. Mat. xxi. 9. The eagerneſs of the people to introduce Chriſt into Jeruſalem; and their demand, in a ſhort time after, to crucify him, repreſents *popular favour*, and agrees with nature and experience. The *rulers* rejecting Chriſt, while many of the common people received him, was the *natural* effect of prejudice. The converſation of our Lord with the Samaritan woman, at the well, was of the ſame kind. See ſeveral other inſtances: p. 100—104.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

Identity of Chriſt's Character.

This argument applies principally to the compariſon of the three firſt Goſpels, with that of John. John wrote after the other Evangeliſts, and ſupplies omiſſions in their narratives; but in relating different actions, and diſcourſes, he preſerves a ſimilarity of manner which indicates, that the actions, and diſcourſes proceed from the ſame perſon.

I. This agreement is moſt ſtrong in our Saviour's mode of teaching; and in that property of it which conſiſts in his drawing of the *doctrine* from the occaſion; or raiſing reflections from the objects, and incidents before him. P. 105—7. [The author here points out this *manner*, in the three firſt evangeliſts, and ſhews its agreement with the examples of Chriſt's diſcourſes preſerved by John. Theſe examples cannot be abridged, the reader muſt, therefore, be referred to the book itſelf. P. 108—15.] There is nothing of this manner perceptible in the ſpeeches recorded in the Acts, nor in any other, but thoſe which are attributed to Chriſt.

II. There ſeems an *affinity* between the hiſtory of Chriſt's placing the little child in the midſt of his diſciples, in the *three* Evangeliſts, and the hiſtory of Chriſt's waſhing the feet of his diſciples, recorded by John. P. 116.

III. The phraſe, "*the Son of Man*" is found, as applied, by Chriſt, to himſelf, in *all* the Goſpels, but is never uſed *of him* by any other perſon. P. 117.

IV. Chriſt is repreſented by the different hiſtorians as *withdrawing* himſelf out of the way, whenever the multitude indicated a diſpoſition to tumult. See Mat. xiv. 22. Luke v. 15, 16. with which compare John v. 13. and vi. 15. P. 118.

V. The reſerve, which, for ſome time, Chriſt uſed in announcing his own character, is recorded by all the Evangeliſts. Mat. xvi. 20. Mark iii. 4. Luke iv. 41. and John xxiv. 35. P. 119.

VI. The difficulty which the diſciples had in underſtanding Chriſt when he ſpoke of his paſſion, and reſurrection, and their anxiety in deſiring an explanation, are noticed in Luke ix. 45. Mark ix. 32. and in John xvi. 16, &c. P. 121.

VII. Our Lord's meekneſs during his laſt ſufferings, which is conſpicuous in the three firſt evangeliſts, is preſerved by John under *ſeparate* examples. John xviii. 20. is very ſimilar to Mark xiv. 48. Luke xxii. 52. In both, there is the ſame tranquillity, and the ſame reference to his public teaching. P. 123. Matthew and Mark make the charge upon which our Lord was condemned to be a threat of deſtroying the temple; but they do *not* ſay upon what circumſtance this calumny was founded. John, in the early part of his hiſtory, ſupplies the defect. See Mark xiv. 5. and John ii. 19. P. 126. The appointment of the twelve Apoſtles is mentioned by the three firſt Evangeliſts, who have given their names. John, through his whole narrative, *ſuppoſes* Chriſt to be accompanied by twelve diſciples; and whenever he notices any one of them, it is one included in the catalogue of the other Evangeliſts. All this beſpeaks reality. P. 127.

CHAP. V.

Originality of our Saviour's Character.

THE Jews were expecting a perſon who ſhould advance their nation to independence and proſperity. Had Jeſus been an *enthuſiaſt*, he would have fallen in with the popular deluſion. P. 129. Had he been an *impoſter*, he would have flattered the prevailing hopes. All the pretended Meſſiahs did ſo, of whom Joſephus mentions many. P. 130. A miſſion, the operation of which, was to take place in another life, was a thing *unthought* of as a ſubject of theſe prophecies. Hence Jeſus came in a character, inconſiſtent with enthuſiaſm and impoſture, both of which have ever *followed* prevailing opinions. P. 131.

CHAP. VI.

Conformity of facts mentioned or referred to in Scripture, with the ſtate of things in thoſe times, as repreſented by foreign and independent accounts.

IF this conformity be made out, it proves, that the writers poſſeſſed a ſpecies of knowledge, which could only belong to an inhabitant of that country, and to one living in that age. Hence the genuineneſs of their writings. P. 133.

The authors by their ſituation muſt have *known* the facts which they relate;—the argument is ſtronger from the *mixed* nature of the alluſions in this book;—the ſcene of action is diſplayed in the greateſt cities of the Roman empire;—alluſions are made to the manners, and principles of the Greeks, Romans, and the Jews, which renders forgery very difficult. A Greek or a Roman in the ſecond, or third century, would have been wanting in Jewiſh literature; a Jewiſh convert would have been deficient in the knowledge of Greece and Rome. P. 134.

[This argument depending, entirely, upon an induction of particulars, the author has collected a great variety of examples, which he has ſo far abridged and contracted, as to render any farther abridgement of them unintelligible, the reader muſt therefore conſult the examples themſelves. P. 136—181.]

The reſult of the detail is, that (1.) theſe agreements appear not only in articles of public hiſtory; but in minute and peculiar circumſtances. (2.) The deſtruction of Jeruſalem produced ſuch a change in the ſtate of the country, that a writer who was unacquainted with the circumſtances of the nation *before* that event, would find it difficult to avoid miſtakes in endeavouring to give detailed accounts of tranſactions connected with thoſe

circumſtances.

circumſtances. (3.) There appears, in the writers of the New Teſtament, a knowledge of the affairs of thoſe times, which we do not find in authors of later ages. P. 182.

There have, however, been ſome difficulties ſtarted; and it has been objected, (1.) That the *taxing* during which Jeſus was born, "*was firſt made whilſt Cyrenius* "*was governor of Syria.*" Luke ii. 2. Now Cyrenius was not governor of Syria until ten years *after* the birth of Chriſt, and a taxing *was* made in the beginning of his government.

Anſwer. The ſentence in Luke may be tranſlated, "*this was the firſt aſſeſſment of Cyrenius, governor of* "*Syria;*" the words *governor of Syria*, being uſed after the name of Cyrenius, as his title; and this title belonging to him at the time of *writing the account*, was naturally ſubjoined to his name, although acquired *after* the tranſaction which the account deſcribes. P. 185.

Objection (2.) Luke in his 3d chap. ſays—"Now in "the fifteenth year of Tiberius Cæſar, Jeſus began to "be about thirty years of age." At this period, according to Joſephus, he muſt have been at leaſt 31, perhaps 33 years old. Anſwer. This difficulty is ſolved by attending to the Greek, which ſignifies, "that he was "*about thirty* years of age," and the adverb *about*, gives all the latitude that is wanted. P. 187.

Objection (3.) Acts v. 36. "For about theſe days roſe "up one Theudas, &c." Joſephus's account of Theudas referred to a tranſaction ſeven years *after* Gamaliel's ſpeech, of which this text is a part. Anſwer. There might be *two* impoſters of the ſame name; for there were *four* perſons of the name of Simon within forty years, and three of Judas within ten years, who were all leaders of inſurrections. P. 189.

Objection

Objection (4.) Mat. xxiii. 34. "Unto the blood of "*Zacharias ſon of Barachias*, whom ye ſlew between "the temple and the altar." There is a Zacharias, whoſe death is related in the 2d book of Chronicles, which ſupports the alluſion; but he was the ſon of Jehoiada. There is alſo Zacharias the prophet, who was ſon to Barachiah, but of whoſe death we have no account. Anſwer. The firſt Zacharias was probably the perſon, and the name of the father has been added *ſince*, by ſome tranſcriber, who took it from the title of the prophecy. P. 191.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

Undeſigned Coincidences.

BETWEEN the letters of St. Paul, and the hiſtory of the Acts of the Apoſtles, there exiſt many notes of *undeſigned* correſpondency; a peruſal of which is ſufficient to prove, that neither the hiſtory was taken from the letters, nor the letters from the hiſtory; and the coincidences are too cloſe and numerous to be accounted for by the accidental concurrences of fiction. P. 195. [In ſupport of this argument, Mr. Paley refers to his *Horæ Paulinæ*, and ſhews how it *bears* upon the general queſtion of the Chriſtian hiſtory. P. 196.]

I. St. Paul, in theſe letters, affirms his own performance of miracles; and that miracles were the ſigns of an Apoſtle.

II. It ſhews that the ſeries of action repreſented by St. Paul was real, which proves, that the original witneſſes of the Chriſtian hiſtory, devoted themſelves to lives of toil and ſuffering in conſequence of the truth of that hiſtory. P. 197.

III. It proves that the author of the "Acts" was well acquainted with St. Paul's hiſtory, and a companion of his travels, which eſtabliſhes the credit of Luke's goſpel.—The ſimilitude between John's goſpel and the firſt Epiſtle of St. John, is remarkable; it is alſo valuable, as the Epiſtle aſſerts the writer's perſonal knowledge of Chriſt's hiſtory. Chap. i. 1—3. P. 199.

CHAP. VIII.

Of the Hiſtory of the Reſurrection.

THE ſtrength of this part of the evidence of Chriſtianity, does not ariſe from its being a more deciſive proof of ſupernatural agency than other miracles, but from the certainty we have, that the apoſtles and firſt teachers *aſſerted* the fact; which would have been known if the goſpels had never been written. Every piece of Scripture recognizes the reſurrection. Every writing from that time to the preſent; *for*, or *againſt* Chriſtianity, ſpeaks of this article as received *without doubt* by all Chriſtians. P. 201.

Queſtion. Did the Apoſtles knowingly publiſh a falſehood; or were they themſelves deceived? The *firſt* is generally given up; the nature of the undertaking, and of the men, exempt their memory from the ſuſpicion of impoſture. The ſolution more deſerving of notice, is that which would reſolve the conduct of the Apoſtles into *enthuſiaſm*; and would claſs the reſurrection with ſtories of apparitions. This compariſon will not ſtand; for Chriſt was ſeen by *many* perſons, ſeparately, and together; by day, as well as by night; who converſed and ate with him, and who examined his perſon. P. 203.

Objection I. But theſe accounts are upon the credit of *our* records.

Anſwer. The reſurrection was aſſerted; it was, therefore, incumbent on the enemy to have produced the dead body. P. 204.

Objection II. The diſciples had ſtolen the body.

Anſwer. This ſuppoſes *fraud*. Beſides it is loaded with improbabilities; ſuch as the ſituation and fears of the diſciples; the impoſſibility of ſucceeding in ſuch an attempt,

attempt, both from the guard ſet over the tomb, and from the lightneſs of the night, it being the time of full moon; and the inevitable conſequences of detection. P. 205.

It is evident alſo, that, if the body had been ſtolen, the Jews would have produced it, as the completeſt anſwer to the ſtory of the reſurrection. P. 207.

CHAP. IX.

SECTION I.

The Propagation of Chriſtianity.

WE are to conſider in *what degree*, within *what time*, and to *what extent*, Chriſtianity was actually propagated.

A few days after the aſcenſion, about 120 diſciples met together, probably perſons connected with the apoſtles, and with one another. (Acts i. 5.) It does not appear that they were aware that a new religion was to be eſtabliſhed. On the day of Pentecoſt three thouſand were added to the ſociety, (Acts ii. 41.) many of whom probably had before been believers in Chriſt, and now openly avowed their attachment to his cauſe. In the fourth chapter, it is ſaid their numbers were 5000; and in the next, we read, that believers were added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women. The ſixth chapter ſpeaks of the diſciples being greatly multiplied in Jeruſalem, and that a great company of prieſts were obedient to the faith. It appears, farther, that the preaching of Chriſtianity was *confined* for more than a year to the city of Jeruſalem. P. 209—15.

A perſecution diſperſed the converts throughout Judea, and Samaria, and during this ſecond period, of four years, Chriſtianity was propagated among Jews, Jewiſh proſelytes, and Samaritans. The apoſtles did not know that they were at liberty to propoſe the religion to mankind at large, until it was revealed to Peter by a miracle. The third period commences, about ſeven years after Chriſt's aſcenſion, with the preaching of the goſpel to the Gentiles of Ceſarea; and before the cloſe of this period, or within thirty years after the death of Chriſt

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his religion had ſpread itſelf through almoſt all the diſtricts of Aſia Minor, through Greece and the Iſlands of the Ægean Sea, the ſea coaſt of Africa, and had extended to Rome; Jeruſalem continuing the centre of the miſſion. P. 215—22. Hence the following obſervations. (1.) The account comes from a perſon who was concerned in a portion of what he relates, and was contemporary with the whole of it. P. 222. (2.) The account is an incomplete account of the propagating of Chriſtianity; therefore, if what we read in the hiſtory be true, much more than what the hiſtory contains muſt be true alſo. P. 223. (3.) That the account is, for this reaſon, more credible. Had it been the author's deſign to have *diſplayed* the early progreſs of Chriſtianity, he would have collected accounts of the other apoſtles. P. 224. (4.) The intimations of the number of converts, and the ſucceſs of the apoſtle's preaching, come out, for the moſt part, *incidentally*; which removes the ſuſpicion of a deſign to exaggerate or deceive. P. 225. The account is confirmed by *parallel teſtimonies*, in the letters of the apoſtles; thoſe of St. Paul are addreſſed to the churches of Corinth, Phillippi, &c. at which places his *miniſtry* is recorded. P. 226.

It is now to be conſidered, how far theſe accounts are confirmed by *other* evidence.

Tacitus ſpeaks of a vaſt multitude of Chriſtians at Rome in the tenth year of Nero. P. 228. Pliny's letter to Trajan, written not quite eighty years after the aſcenſion, proves that the Chriſtians in Pontus and Bithynia were very numerous, and had ſubſiſted there ſome conſiderable time; now there is *no* evidence that Chriſtians were more numerous in thoſe places, than in other parts of the Roman empire; hence the *truth* of the repreſentations given of the general ſtate of Chriſtianity in the world of Chriſtian writers. P. 230—4. Juſtin Martyr,

CHAP. IX.

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Martyr, who wrote thirty years after Pliny, ſays, there is not a nation, either Greek or Barbarian, amongſt whom prayers are not offered to the Father by the name of Jeſus. P. 235. The rapid and general diffuſion of Chriſtianity is noticed by ſucceeding writers to the time of Conſtantine, who probably declared himſelf on the ſide of the Chriſtians, becauſe they were the powerful party. Jerome, in the year 392, reckons up 120 *Chriſtian writers*. P. 236—45.

SECT. II.

Reflections on the preceding Account.

IN viewing the progreſs of Chriſtianity, our firſt attention is due to the number of converts at Jeruſalem, after the founder's death;—then, to attend to the eſtabliſhment of Chriſtian ſocieties in Judea and Galilee;—afterwards, to recollect the ſucceſs of the apoſtles in their travels;—finally, to conſider the ſubſequent ſpread of the religion. In all theſe ſtages the hiſtory is without a parallel, inaſmuch, as it was the prevalency of a doctrine depending on a matter of fact, in oppoſition to the prejudices of education, faſhion, and worldly policy. P. 246—9.

If the widely diſproportionate effects which attend the preaching of *modern* miſſionaries of Chriſtianity, in compariſon with what followed the miniſtry of Chriſt and his apoſtles, under circumſtances either alike, or not ſo unlike as to account for the difference, be duly conſidered, it will appear reaſonable to conclude, that they poſſeſſed means of conviction, which we have not; that they had proofs to appeal to, which we want. P. 250—61.

SECT.

SECT. III.

Of the Religion of Mahomet.

MAHOMETANISM reſembles Chriſtianity, in the rapidity of its progreſs; the recency of its hiſtory; and the *prophetic* character aſſumed by its author. But there are points of difference, which ſeparate the two caſes entirely.

I. Mahomet did not found his pretenſions upon miracles, *capable of being known, and atteſted by others*, he expreſsly diſclaims the power. P. 261. Hence no credit is due to the miraculous ſtories related of Mahomet by Abulfeda, who wrote the account 600 years after his death; or which are found in the legend of Al. Janabi, who came 200 years later. P. 264. Admitting the whole of Mahomet's authentic hiſtory, as far as was witneſſed by others, to be true, he might ſtill be an impoſter, or enthuſiaſt, or an union of both: but admit almoſt any part of Chriſt's public hiſtory to be true, and he muſt have come from God. P. 266.

Objection. If one religion could make its way without miracles, why might not another?

Anſwer. This is not the queſtion. The proper queſtion is, whether a religion, founding itſelf on miracles, could ſucceed without any reality to reſt on? As Mahomet did not take this courſe, it may be preſumed very difficult, if not impoſſible. He knew the importance of miracles by inceſſantly referring to thoſe of preceding prophets. P. 267.

II. The eſtabliſhment of Mahomet's religion was affected by cauſes, which in no degree, appertained to the origin of Chriſtianity.

During the firſt *ten* years, when Mahomet uſed only perſuaſion, and confined his exertions to Mecca; it appears,

pears, that he could reckon upon no more converts than 83 men and 18 women, yet this progreſs was aided by the following important advantages: 1. He was the grandſon of the moſt honourable and powerful family in Mecca. 2. He conducted his deſign with great art and prudence. 3. The Arabs probably acknowledged *one* ſupreme Deity, which, at firſt, was the leading doctrine of Mahomet. 4. Mahomet ſeems to have had theſe two purpoſes in view, *to make converts, and thoſe converts ſoldiers*, as the following particulars will ſhew. (1.) He aſſures the Jews, Chriſtians, and Arabs, that *his* religion had been originally their own. (2.) He never ceaſed from deſcribing the future anguiſh of unbelievers. (3.) His voluptuous paradiſe. (4.) The higheſt heavens for thoſe who fought his battles, or expended their fortunes in his cauſe. (5.) He applied the doctrine of predeſtination to fortify the courage of his adherents. (6.) He allowed a plurality of wives, in compliance with the climate of the country. P. 268—79.

When Mahomet was received into the city of Medina, he changed his conduct, pretending that he had received a commiſſion to *deſtroy* infidels, and to ſet up the true faith by the *ſword*. An early victory over a very ſuperior force eſtabliſhed his renown; we have, therefore, from this time nothing left to account for, but, that he ſhould be able to collect an army, and that his army ſhould conquer. P. 280—5.

The ſucceſs of Mahometaniſm during this, and every future period cannot be ſtated in prejudice of the Chriſtian argument; nor does it ſtand in the way of this important concluſion, that the propagation of Chriſtianity, in the manner, and under the circumſtances in which it was propagated, is an *unique*, in the hiſtory of the ſpecies. A Jewiſh peaſant overthrew the religion of the world. P. 285—7.

PART

PART THE THIRD.

A BRIEF CONSIDERATION OF SOME POPULAR OBJECTIONS.

CHAP. I.

The diſcrepancies between the ſeveral Goſpels.

A STORY ſhould not be rejected, by reaſon of ſome *diverſity* of circumſtances with which it is related; for the character of human teſtimony is, ſubſtantial truth under circumſtantial variety; but a cloſe agreement induces ſuſpicion of confederacy, and fraud. Important variations, and even *contradictions*, are not always deemed ſufficient to ſhake the credibility of the fact. The embaſſy of the Jews to Claudian, Philo places in *harveſt*, Joſephus in *ſeed time*. Lord Clarendon ſtates, that the Marquis of Argyle was condemned to be *hanged*, which was performed on the *ſame day*. *Four* other hiſtorians ſay, that he was *beheaded* upon the *Monday*, having been condemned on the *Saturday*. This contradiction never led a perſon to doubt, whether the Marquis was executed or not. Dr. Middleton thought the different hours of the day aſſigned to the crucifixion, by John,

and the other Evangeliſts, did not admit of reconcilement. But this does not injure the hiſtory of the principal fact. P. 289—92.

A great deal of the diſcrepancy ariſes from omiſſion, which is always an uncertain ground of objection. Suetonius, Tacitus, and Dio Caſſius, have all written of the reign of Tiberius, and each has omitted many things mentioned by the reſt. Theſe diſcrepancies will be more numerous, when men do not write hiſtories, but *memoirs*, which, perhaps, is the true name of the goſpels, (i. e.) when they do *not* undertake to deliver, in the order of time, a regular account of *all* things of importance, which, the ſubject of the hiſtory, did and ſaid, but only ſuch paſſages as were ſuggeſted by their *particular deſign*, at the time of writing. P. 292—3.

CHAP. II.

Erroneous opinions imputed to the Apoſtles.

OBJECTIONS have been raiſed concerning the quotations of the Old Teſtament, found in the New; they are ſaid to be applied *contrary* to the ſenſe of the original. It is anſwered, that many of theſe quotations were only intended as *accommodations*, common to writers of all countries. P. 298. Another error imputed to the firſt Chriſtians, was the expected approach of the day of judgment. Similar to this, was their aſſurance that John would *not* die, which aroſe from a miſinterpretation of our Saviour's words; hence it is objected, that admitting the *fallibility* of the apoſtolic judgment, and on what can we rely? Anſwer. Give me the apoſtles' teſtimony, and I do not ſtand in need of their *judgment;* give me facts, and I have all that I want. P. 299—301. The two following cautions will exclude all uncertainty on this head.

I. To ſeparate what was the object of the apoſtolic miſſion, and declared by them to be ſo; from what was extraneous. Of points *clearly* extraneous nothing need be ſaid. Of points incidentally connected with it, demoniacal poſſeſſion is one. The *doctrine* Chriſt did not bring into the world. The *malady* was real, the *cure* was real; the matter of fact was in either caſe the ſame. P. 301.

II. In reading the apoſtolic writings, we are to diſtinguiſh between their *doctrines*, and their *arguments*. The former came to them by *revelation*, but they were wont to ſupport them by ſuch conſiderations as their own thoughts ſuggeſted. P. 303.

CHAP. III.

The connection of Chriſtianity with the Jewiſh Hiſtory.

CHRIST aſſumes the *divine* origin of the Moſaic inſtitution, and recognizes the *prophetic* character of many of the antient Jewiſh writers.

Thus far we are bound to go: but we are not to make Chriſtianity anſwerable for the circumſtantial truth of each ſeparate paſſage in the Old Teſtament. In our Saviour's time, the books were univerſally read, by the Jews; he and his apoſtles uſed them, and referred to them. Yet except where he expreſsly aſcribes a divine authority to particular predictions, we cannot, ſtrictly, draw any concluſions from the books being ſo uſed. P. 306—11.

CHAP. IV.

Rejection of Chriſtianity.

IT is acknowledged, that the Chriſtian religion did not produce an univerſal, or even a general conviction in the minds of men, of the age and country in which it appeared: and this has been called the *rejection* of the Chriſtian hiſtory and miracles. This objection divides itſelf into two parts. P. 312.

I. As to the *Jew*. With us there is but one queſtion; were the miracles really wrought? Admitting this, we acknowledge the whole. This does not appear to have been the caſe with the Jews. John vii. 21—31. exhibits the reaſoning of different ſorts of perſons, upon the occaſion of a real miracle. The account of Lazarus's reſurrection is obſervable for the ſame purpoſe. The ſpectators did *not* perceive, that the works of Jeſus bore witneſs to the truth of his pretenſions. P. 313—18.

In the ninth chap. of John's goſpel, we have a full account of the cure of the blind man; a miracle ſubmitted to all the ſcrutiny which a ſceptic could propoſe; yet the *rulers* rejected its force; but to the mind of the man reſtored, it had its proper and natural operation. P. 219.

Queſtion. How could ſuch a turn of thought obtain with the antient Jews?

Anſwer (1.) Their expectation of a Meſſiah, was of a nature totally different, from what the appearance of Jeſus beſpoke him to be. (2.) Their perſuaſion of the agency of demons in the production of ſupernatural effects. The *firſt* would put them to ſeeking for an excuſe, why they ſhould not receive Jeſus in the character he claimed. The *other* ſupplied ſuch an excuſe. Let Chriſt work his miracles, the anſwer was ready, he wrought them by the aſſiſtance of demons. P. 320.

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II. The *infidelity* of the *Gentile world* is to be reſolved, into the contempt they had for Chriſtianity, prior to examination. P. 323.

The ſtate of religion among the Greeks, and Romans, had a tendency to induce this diſpoſition; Chriſtianity had nothing to attract their notice; it mixed with no politics;—it produced no fine writers;—the nature, office, and miniſtry of Jeſus would be alien to their conceptions. Its connection with Judaiſm would injure it with the learned Heathen, who regarded *Jehovah* himſelf as the *idol* of the Jewiſh nation; and this would preclude all *inquiry* among men of education; which accounts alſo for their *ſilence* on the ſubject. In this manner Chriſtianity *was* treated by Pliny the younger, and by Tacitus. Without inquiry Tacitus diſpoſes of the whole queſtion, by calling it a "*pernicious ſuperſtition*," a proof how little he knew, or concerned himſelf about the matter. Read the inſtructions of Paul to the Roman converts: ch. xii. 9—xiii. 13. and then judge of this *pernicious ſuperſtition*. Or take Pliny's deſcription of the conduct and principles of this ſect, and then call Chriſtianity a *pernicious ſuperſtition*. P. 323—34.

Upon the words of Tacitus we may build theſe obſervations. (1.) The learned men of that age beheld Chriſtianity in a diſtant and obſcure view. P. 325. (2.) But little reliance can be placed upon the moſt acute judgments in ſubjects which they are pleaſed to deſpiſe. Had not Chriſtianity ſurvived to tell its own ſtory, it muſt have gone down to poſterity as a "*pernicious ſuperſtition.*" (3.) This contempt prior to examination, is an intellectual vice, from which the greateſt faculties of mind are not free. P. 336. (4.) We need not be ſurpriſed that many writers of that age did *not* mention Chriſtianity, when thoſe who did, appear to have miſconceived its nature and character. P. 337.

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The Heathen public were probably divided into two claſſes; thoſe who deſpiſed Chriſtianity before hand; and thoſe who received it. Therefore the writers would be, thoſe who were ſilent about Chriſtianity, and thoſe who were Chriſtians. The notion of *magic* was reſorted to, by the *heathen* adverſaries, as that of *diabolical* agency was by the Jews. P. 337—40.

CHAP. V.

That the Chriſtian miracles are not recited, or appealed to, by early Chriſtian writers themſelves, ſo fully or frequently as might have been expected.

I. THIS objection applies to the letters of the Apoſtles, which are either *hortatory*, or *argumentative*. In the *former* there appears no place for more references than we find;—the nature of the *argumentative* epiſtles accounts for the infrequency of the alluſions. They were not written to prove the truth of Chriſtianity, but to ſhew its *deſign* and *effects*; and of thoſe effects the value and extent. Miraculous evidence muſt be the *ground* of all the epiſtles. P. 342. The *apoſtolic epiſtles*, reſemble the *apoſtolic ſpeeches*. P. 344. Peter, in ſix ſpeeches, refers but *twice* to the miracles of Chriſt; and *once* to the miraculous powers which he himſelf poſſeſſed. Stephen's long ſpeech contains no reference to miracles. St. Paul, before Feſtus, appeals to Chriſt's reſurrection, and his own converſion, to which there are references in his epiſtles, and *three* indubitable references to the miracles which he himſelf wrought. Hence the agreement between his ſpeeches and letters.

The *miraculous* hiſtory was preſuppoſed, and therefore the point which occuppied the writer's thoughts was this; *allowing* the hiſtory to be true, ought Jeſus to be received as the *Meſſiah*; if ſo, what was the object, and benefit of his miſſion. P. 345—9.

II. The ſame obſervations will apply to the writings of the *Fathers*; the ſubjects of which they treated, did not lead them to any direct recital of the Chriſtian hiſtory. P. 249. The next claſs of writers is the *Apologiſts*, the avowed defenders of Chriſtianity. Quadratus, the moſt antient, appealed to the miracles of Chriſt, in

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terms as expreſs as we could deſire. P. 351. Juſtin Martyr aſſerts the performance of miracles by Chriſt, in words as ſtrong as language will admit; and alſo aſſigns the reaſon why he had recourſe to the argument from *prophecy*, rather than from *miracles*, viz. that his opponents would aſcribe the latter to magic. P. 352. Irenæus, and Lactantius notice the ſame evaſion in the adverſaries of Chriſtianity. P. 353. Similar obſervations may be made reſpecting Tertullian, Origen, and Jerome, which prove that the miracles of Chriſt were appealed to, in their literal ſenſe, by the early *Apologiſts* for Chriſtianity, which is an anſwer to the objecjection. P. 354—8.

CHAP. VI.

Want of univerſality in the knowledge and reception of Chriſtianity, and of greater clearneſs in the evidence.

OBJECTION. If revelation came from God, no part of the human ſpecies would remain ignorant of it, no underſtanding could fail of being convinced by it.

Anſwer. The advocates of Chriſtianity do not pretend that their religion poſſeſſes theſe qualities, nor do they deny it to have been within the compaſs of divine power to have communicated to the world, a ſtronger and more extenſive influence. P. 360. The not having more evidence is not, however, a ſufficient reaſon for rejecting that which we have. If this diſpenſation labour under no defects, but what are common to others, we are not juſtified in rejecting it. Throughout *nature*, which is a ſyſtem of beneficence, we are ſeldom able to make out a ſyſtem of optimiſm. To inquire what the Deity *might* have done, is a mode of reaſoning which will *not* do in *natural hiſtory*, nor in *natural religion*, and therefore cannot, with ſafety, be applied to *revelation*. The general character of the works of nature, is, on the one hand, goodneſs in deſign and effect, and on the other a liability to difficulty and objections. Chriſtianity participates in the ſame character; nevertheleſs the real ſyſtem in both caſes, may be a ſyſtem of ſtrict optimiſm, although the proof be hidden from us. P. 361—5. If Chriſtianity be compared with the ſtate and progreſs of natural religion, the objector will gain nothing by the compariſon. *Natural religion* is not univerſal: the exiſtence of the Deity is not known to all, but it cannot be argued, that therefore, he does not exiſt. P. 366. If Chriſtianity be regarded as an inſtrument for the melioration of mankind, its progreſs reſembles that of other

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cauſes by which human life is improved; it has put things into a *train*; it may become univerſal; and the world may continue in that ſtate ſo long, as that its duration may bear a vaſt proportion to the time of its partial influence. P. 367. Beſides,

1. *Irreſiſtable evidence* would reſtrain the voluntary powers too much, to anſwer the purpoſe of trial, or probation. P. 268.

2. It would leave no place for the admiſſion of *internal* evidence, which applies itſelf to the knowledge, love, and practice of virtue, and which operates in proportion to the degree of thoſe qualities, which it finds in the perſon whom it addreſſes. P. 369.

3. It may be queſtioned, whether the perfect diſplay of a future ſtate, would not make a degree of impreſſion upon the mind, incompatible with the duties of life. P. 372.

CHAP. VII.

The ſuppoſed Effects of Chriſtianity.

IT has been contended, that Chriſtianity has had a bad effect upon public happineſs. P. 375.

I. The influence of religion is ſought in a wrong place. It is not to be looked for in the councils of princes; in the reſolutions of popular aſſemblies; in the conduct of governments towards their ſubjects, of ſovereigns to one another, of conquerors at the head of armies; topics which fill the page of hiſtory: but it muſt be perceived in the ſilent courſe of private life. The ſubſtance of religion is neceſſarily *inviſible*. Much of the influence of Chriſtianity may be felt in times of public diſtreſs. The Chriſtian religion *acts* upon public uſages and inſtitutions, reſpecting war, government, marriage, public amuſements, and the ſtate of the poor. P. 376—81.

But the argument depended on is, the benefit of religion in *private* ſtations. It has been the author of virtue and happineſs to millions; it hath had a *ſenſible* influence on the public judgment of morals; hence many may be kept in order by Chriſtianity who are *not* Chriſtians. But it is not to be appreciated by its *temporal effects;* its influence upon the *whole* of human exiſtence muſt be eſtimated. P. 381—4.

II. Chriſtianity is charged with many conſequences for which it is not anſwerable.

Religion has *not* made perſecuting laws; it is anſwerable for no part of the miſchiefs of perſecution. Had there been in the New Teſtament, what there are in the Koran, precepts authoriſing *coercion*, in the propagation of religion, the caſe would have been different. If Chriſtianity be charged with every miſchief, of which it has been the *occaſion*, though not the *motive;* the anſwer is, that if the malevolent paſſions be there, the world will never want occaſions. P. 384—7.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

THE CONCLUSION.

IN religion much depends on the *order* of our inquiries. He who takes up a ſyſtem of divinity, believing *every part* muſt be true, or the *whole* falſe, approaches the diſcuſſion with great diſadvantage. Under this prejudice we are all, in ſome meaſure, introduced to our religious ſtudies; the *doctrines* of religion come to us before the *proofs*, hence perſons of haſty tempers have rejected the whole. We ought firſt to examine the general truth of its principles, and then inquire into its doctrines. What is clear in Chriſtianity is ſufficiently valuable; what is dubious,—unneceſſary, and of ſubordinate importance. P. 390—3.

The truth of Chriſtianity depends upon its leading facts, and upon them alone. Of theſe we have ſufficient evidence. We have unconteſted and inconteſtible points to which the hiſtory of the human ſpecies hath nothing ſimilar to offer. A Jewiſh peaſant without force, or influence, changed the religion of the world. After he had been put to death, his companions aſſerted his ſupernatural character, founded on ſupernatural operations, and in teſtimony of theſe aſſertions they ſuffered perſecution and death. A very few days after, this perſon had been publicly executed; and in the very city in which he was buried, theſe his companions declare, with one voice, that his body was reſtored to life; in this fact they perſiſted, in the face of thoſe who had killed him, and who were armed with the whole power of the country. As to theſe facts, the Chriſtian ſtory hath never varied; nor has any other ever been ſet up in its room. All ſects, in all ages, have *concurred* in repreſenting theſe facts in this manner. P. 394—7.

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Theſe propoſitions prove the exiſtence of the tranſaction. The particulars we have from the perſons themſelves, and their companions, in *four* books, the authenticity of which is eſtabliſhed by ſtronger proofs, than belong to almoſt any other antient book. They alſo bear ſtrong *internal* evidence of their truth, inaſmuch as the writers underſtood the hiſtory, and uſages of the times to which they refer. In comparing them with one another, we find them varying, ſo as to repel ſuſpicion of *confederacy*, and ſo agreeing under this variety, as to ſhew they had one real tranſaction for their common foundation. P. 398—400.

The four narratives are confined to the hiſtory of the founder, and end with *his* miniſtry. The ſtory is carried on by a perſon connected with the buſineſs, and the ſubſtance is *confirmed* by a number of *original letters*, written by a perſon who is the principal ſubject of the hiſtory. P. 401.

The miracles were not *ſecret*, nor *momentary*, nor *tentative*, nor *ambiguous*, nor performed under the ſanction of *authority*, with the ſpectators on their ſide, nor in affirmance of tenets already eſtabliſhed. The evidence of theſe miracles was contemporary;—publiſhed on the ſpot;—involved queſtions of the greateſt magnitude;—contradicted fixed prejudices;—and it required from thoſe who accepted it, principles and conduct expoſed to outrage and perſecution. P. 403.

The event, as might be expected, was *noticed* in the prophetic writings of the Jews; had the conſequences been more diſtinctly revealed, it would have cooled their ardour for an inſtitution, which was eventually to give place to one more perfect. P. 405.

The great importance of revelation is to be eſtimated from the *doctrine* of a reſurrection from the dead; the

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other articles of the Chriſtian faith are but adjuncts to this; its *morality* is wiſe, and pure, neither adapted to vulgar prejudices, nor flattering popular notions, nor excuſing eſtabliſhed practices, but calculated to promote human happineſs. P. 406.

The Deity to *fix* the inſtitution, vouchſafed a miraculous atteſtation; he then committed its future progreſs to the natural means of human communication. In this, Chriſtianity is analogous to moſt other proviſions for human happineſs. The proviſion is made, and left to act according to the laws of a more general ſyſtem. P. 408.

Let the conſtant recurrence to our obſervation, of contrivance, deſign, and wiſdom in the works of nature, fix upon our minds the belief of a God, and all is eaſy. In the councils of ſuch a being, it is not improbable that there ſhould be a future ſtate, or that we ſhould be acquainted with it. A future ſtate rectifies every thing; becauſe if moral agents be eventually happy, or miſerable, according to their conduct, in the ſtations aſſigned them here, it ſeems not very material by what rules theſe ſtations are aſſigned; it therefore ſolves all objections to the divine goodneſs. Nevertheleſs, a higher degree of aſſurance was neceſſary than that drawn from the light of nature, to overcome the ſhock which the ſenſes receive by the appearances of death. Abſtractedly conſidered, perhaps, there is no more difficulty in apprehending the reſurrection of a dead man, than in the conception of a child.

Since, however, a future ſtate, and the revelation of a future ſtate, is not only perfectly conſiſtent with the attributes of God; but alſo removes many difficulties;—ſince there is ſuch a ſtrong body of hiſtorical evidence that ſuch a revelation has been communicated, we may

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fet our minds at reſt with the aſſurance, that in the reſources of *creative* wiſdom, expedients cannot be wanted to carry into effect what the Deity hath propoſed. P. 409. to the end.

FINIS.

set our minds at rest with the assurance, that in the resources of *creative* wisdom, expedients cannot be wanted to carry into effect what the Deity hath proposed. P. 409. to the end.

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